

Periodical

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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## *Some Literary Fallacies*

GRANVILLE HICKS<sup>1</sup>

BERNARD DE VOTO has been and is many things to many people. To Sinclair Lewis he is "a fool and a tedious and egotistical fool," "a liar and a pompous and boresome liar." To Garrett Mattingly, his biographer, he is "one of the chief forces in contemporary letters," a major historian, a major novelist, and a major critic. If the editors of various popular magazines find him, either under his own name or under the pseudonym of John August, a dependable producer of merchantable fiction, it is also true that he has been editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* and contributes a monthly essay to *Harper's*. To Philip Rahv he is a man who "hates literature," whereas to John Chamberlain he is merely the amusingly bad boy of literary criticism. Catherine Brinker Bowen calls his latest book "the most ringing salutation to the American belief that I, for one, have heard or read in many years," and certainly *The Literary Fallacy* contains eloquent words in praise of the common man and of the democratic ideal; but readers with good memories will recall that not many years ago De Voto was a prominent

apologist for the antidemocratic theories of Pareto.

These disagreements are not merely the differences of opinion that make horse racing and literary controversy possible. The fact is that De Voto is both many-sided and full of contradictions. In the course of his career he has periodically laid hold of fragments of important truth; but, invariably, instead of trying to see how his piece of truth fitted with somebody else's, he has used it as a shillalah.

Essentially *The Literary Fallacy*, De Voto's latest book, is a study of the place of the writer in contemporary society. This is an important subject and one that has been discussed in our time by many critics, most notably, perhaps, by Van Wyck Brooks. One thinks of Brooks because it is at his head that De Voto, these fifteen years, has been aiming his lustiest blows, and it is Brooks who is the villain of *The Literary Fallacy*. Yet Brooks, in *The Opinions of Oliver Allston*, makes substantially the same point about contemporary literature as De Voto makes. Both men assert that various highly regarded American writers of the twenties and thirties were almost completely isolated from and indiffer-

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Great Tradition*, *Figures of Tradition*, and *Only One Storm*.

ent to the masses of the American people. (Brooks speaks of the isolation of British and French authors as well, but the argument is the same.) And to this isolation both men attribute the shortcomings of the literature that was produced between the wars.

We shall sooner or later have to ask ourselves whether the indictment is true and then what can be done about the phenomenon of isolation if it exists. But instead of trying to answer these questions directly, let us first see what De Voto and Brooks have to offer in the way of evidence and argument.

De Voto begins by telling us what he is talking about:

Reduced to general terms, the literary fallacy assumes: that a culture may be truly understood and judged solely by means of its literature, that literature embodies truly and completely both the values and the content of a culture, that literature is the highest expression of a culture, that literature is the measure of life, and finally that life is subordinate to literature.

The argument that follows may be stripped down to the following propositions: (1) Van Wyck Brooks was guilty of the literary fallacy; (2) many writers of the twenties were influenced by Brooks; and the shortcomings of Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, and John Dos Passos may be traced to the Brooks influence; and (3) the writers of the twenties gave a false picture of America, and this false picture was a source of aid and comfort to fascism.

Here, quite obviously, is De Voto on the warpath, and, as he has from time to time admitted, he likes to go into battle with his club swinging. I doubt if anyone in the world was ever guilty of the literary fallacy in the form in which De Voto states it, and whoever

has read ten pages of Van Wyck Brooks knows that he was not and is not. Moreover, there is not the slightest evidence that any of the writers De Voto names was greatly influenced by Brooks; nor is there any evidence that these writers—with the possible exception of T. S. Eliot—have held to the literary fallacy in any form; nor is there any evidence that the shortcomings De Voto attributes to these writers, sometimes justly, sometimes unjustly, derive from the literary fallacy. Finally, the talk about fascism is pure flag-waving—a gesture De Voto is quick to ridicule in others. If, however, refutation seems necessary, it should be enough to point out that the books of Lewis, Hemingway, and Dos Passos were burned and banned by the Nazis.

There is another line of argument that De Voto adopts. After a rather effective account of the complexity of social forces in the twenties, he says, "Our society greatly needed laborious study, patient exploration, sympathetic understanding." But, he continues, "instead of studying American life, literature denounced it. Instead of working to understand American life, literature repudiated it." Therefore, he concludes, "literature became increasingly debilitated, capricious, querulous, and irrelevant."

Now it is indisputably true that our society—any society, of course—demands laborious study; and, though no one would deny the statement in theory, many writers, including some De Voto names and some he does not, have drawn vast conclusions from scanty facts. The progress of the argument, however, is open to question. Note that he says that "literature," not certain writers, denounced and repudiated American life. Yet he cites only a few authors and, as



a matter of fact, names as many exceptions—Farrell, Sandburg, Robinson, Cather, Frost, Benét—as he does examples. As for the debilitation of literature, De Voto himself says of the writers of the twenties:

In the average they were the liveliest, the most vigorous, the most entertaining writers the United States has ever had. No one who lived and read his way through the Twenties will forget the verve, the excitement of that literature, the sheer animal spirits with which it treated even its most lugubrious themes.

But nothing stops De Voto's onward rush: "Never in any country or any age had writers so misrepresented their culture, never had they been so unanimously wrong." In support of this sweeping contention he introduces two pieces of evidence. First, Major Powell was a great scientist and wrote an important book, but none of the leading American critics ever heard of him. Second, medicine made great progress in the twenties, but one would never guess it from the novels of the period. Refusing to quibble over Major Powell, I will gladly admit that certain historians of American literature—myself included, if anyone is interested—have been less than perfectly equipped for the tasks they have undertaken. (Perhaps if the social and intellectual historians had done their own work more effectively, the critics would not have had to go so far outside their special province.) I will also grant that many aspects of American life in the twenties, some of them both admirable and important, are ignored by the particular writers De Voto damns. But one can admit this and vastly more, and still that generalization of De Voto's will stand starkly against the horizon without visible means of support. Nor does he help matters by bringing out the flag again, as he does in his last chapter.

I can think of few novelists who even hinted that American youth had grown soft, whereas statements to that effect could be read almost daily in the editorial columns of conservative newspapers. The novelists De Voto mentions brought many charges against the American people—charges that may or may not have been just—but they did not, I think, attack them for inefficiency, cowardice, or lack of patriotism.

It is no wonder that many critics, finding De Voto unable to define or to deal with the issues he sought to raise, have simply dismissed his book. But let us take one more look for a fragment of truth, which is to be found, if anywhere, in this passage:

The moral of our literature between wars is that literature must come upon futility and despair unless it begins in fellowship from within. Rejection, the attitude of superiority, disdain of the experience of ordinary people, repudiation of the values to which the generality of a writer's countrymen devote their lives—the literature of my generation tried that path and found that the path ended in impotence and the courtship of death. The evils and abuses of society may be intolerable, but my generation has proved that literature can do nothing whatever about them from outside.

Despite earlier prophets of doom—and I might again include myself—I doubt if it is accurate to say that the literature of the twenties, or even the very narrow segment of that literature De Voto has chosen to deal with, ended in impotence and death; but one should perhaps forgive the presence of hyperbole in a passage filled with such moral fervor. De Voto has taken high ground. Rejection, superiority, disdain? Surely these are attitudes we must all condemn. But what about the next phrase? What about "repudiation of the values to which the generality of a writer's countrymen devote their lives"? One



thinks of the great authors who have been rebels, who have damned and double damned the prevailing values. One thinks of Mark Twain, whom De Voto has repeatedly called the greatest of American writers. Did he accept the values of the majority? Not if we can trust Bernard De Voto's *Mark Twain's America*, for there it is written: "No one can read these books without becoming aware that the community set down with such creative gusto and such detachment of manner is nevertheless condemned." De Voto goes further, maintaining that Mark Twain's books began the revolt against the village. More than that: Mark Twain repudiated democracy. More than that: "In this shape the literature of futility, of disillusionment, and of defeat begins in America." If this account is to be taken literally, De Voto should be attacking Mark Twain and not Van Wyck Brooks for the sins of the twenties.

I shall not blame the reader if at this point he loses all confidence in De Voto's ability to handle literary ideas. Nevertheless, I believe the paragraph I have quoted deserves further thought. Let us supply the qualifications that De Voto so carelessly omits. Let us say that certain noted writers of the twenties and thirties were not so much critical of the values of their society as indifferent to them, and let us say that they were indifferent because they felt that they had little in common with the bulk of the people who made up that society. Even that moderate indictment is important if true, and I do believe that it is true.

The problem of the relationship between the artist and the society in which he lives is, as I have said, the problem to which Van Wyck Brooks has devoted his life. He wrote about it first in *America's Coming-of-Age* (1915) and *Letters*

and *Leadership* (1918). These are the books that influenced the twenties and, according to De Voto, ruined so many promising young authors. But the Brooks described in De Voto's writings is mostly a myth. Far from urging writers to isolate themselves from society, Brooks challenged them to accept the social responsibility of literature. "Poets and novelists and critics are the pathfinders of society," he wrote; "to them belong the vision without which the people perish."

Brooks's argument in these two books and their immediate successors does not lend itself to easy summary, but perhaps the substance can be roughly stated. America, he found, had not produced a great literature. This was understandable, for Puritanism had given us a tradition hostile to the arts, and this hostility had been intensified and prolonged by conditions of frontier life. America, therefore, had little to oppose to the materialism, the competitiveness, and the arrogant individualism of the machine age. Our earlier writers had set forth high ideals but had failed to apply them to the real situation in America, and hence the spiritual evils of our materialistic economy had been unmitigated. Here was an apparently hopeless dilemma: our society was unfavorable to the growth of a great literature, and yet only a great literature could save it. Brooks suggested two remedies: the substitution of socialism for an economic system based on greed and the development of "a literature fully aware of the difficulties of the American situation and able, in some sense, to meet them." The juxtaposition of socialism and great literature was not accidental; for, Brooks wrote, "no true social revolution will ever be possible in America till a race of artists, profound and sincere, has

brought us face to face with our own experience and set working in that experience the leaven of the highest culture." If someone asked how the artist could achieve the necessary profundity and sincerity in so hostile an environment, Brooks had no direct answer; but what he felt was clear enough. He felt that if artists had a deep enough desire, they could overcome all obstacles, break out of their slavery, and summon us all to freedom. His function as critic was to create that deep desire.

We cannot deny, since Brooks has himself admitted, that he started out with a preconceived idea of the American past and that he often failed to take relevant evidence into account. We cannot deny, either, that he was guilty of a literary fallacy, for he attached more importance to literature than to the other arts and tended to minimize non-literary civilizing forces. But this, as Malcolm Cowley has said, is merely a form of the general professional fallacy. Being a man of letters, Brooks exaggerated the importance of literature just as farmers exaggerate the importance of agriculture or plumbers the importance of plumbing. When all admissions have been made and all corrections acknowledged, the view of literature expressed by Brooks in the essays he published on the eve of the twenties bears little resemblance to De Voto's definition of the literary fallacy. And in practice his influence was a mighty force against dilettantism, irresponsibility, indifference, and snobbishness.

So much for the early Brooks. What of the author of *The Flowering of New England* and *Indian Summer*? Erudite, appreciative, full of luminous insights, these volumes more than atone for the impatience Brooks once showed in writing of "our poets." I can agree with the

students of American literature who wish that Brooks had been more genuinely and consistently critical. I can agree, too, with De Voto when he complains that Brooks has failed to show how the literature of New England was shaped by the life of New England and the life of the nation as a whole. But neither these two valid objections nor the host of petty criticisms De Voto offers alters my conviction that the two volumes constitute the finest account of a literary period that has appeared in America.

Unfortunately, however, Brooks's increased respect for the American past has been accompanied by a deepening alienation from contemporary literature. In *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* he explains that Allston, his alter ego, rejected the "high ideals" of nineteenth-century American writers "because the abuses that lay behind the 'high ideals' were more actual to him than the ideals themselves." Others went even further:

Morality and ideals were a stench in the nostrils!—and the more the young and the sensitive were affectionate and trustful, the more they turned against their affection and trust. They did not wish to believe in things, they did not wish to love things; they cultivated suspicion, distrust, and hatred, because they wished to be honest themselves and save a part of their self-respect—only on these terms could they survive.

Brooks-Allston thought he could understand their feelings, but he began to wonder if the pendulum had not swung too far. "Now, the writers in question, possessing their feelings, could only have written as they had. Allston did not quarrel with them for this; he did not quarrel with them for being sincere. But was it not *immature*, he said, to throw up the sponge of life as they did?"

Having reached this point in the argument, one is prepared for what follows:

France, sapped by negativism, had gone down before Hitler; and Allston had eagerly watched the defiance of England. The English writers of the post-war years had shared the negativism of American writers, and he said to himself, If these English writers really express the English people, England will go down before Hitler also. But England did not go down,—whatever the outcome might yet be, the English had proved that these writers had never expressed them.

This is exactly De Voto's argument, in pre-Pearl Harbor terms. And Brooks goes on in the same way:

I think it [the literature of our time] has one trait, and one that is striking in a perspective now of twenty-five years; and this is that writers have ceased to be *voices of the people*. . . . Preponderantly, our literature of the last quarter-century has been the expression of self-conscious intellectuals who do not even want to be voices of the people.

Inevitably one is more seriously concerned with such statements when they are made by Van Wyck Brooks than when they are made by Bernard De Voto. Both men are, of course, perfectly right when they lament the isolation of the writer in modern society, but they are wrong when they put the blame solely or primarily on the writers themselves. Brooks qualifies his indictment more carefully than De Voto, but when he talks about Joyce and Proust, his tone is unpleasantly like the tone of *The Literary Fallacy*; and there is something ominous in his assertion that the influence of what he calls the coterie writers, the writers with the death drive, must be "cleared out of the way." Brooks has always called upon writers to rise above the circumstances in which they found themselves, and the challenge has been a healthy one. It was, moreover, a challenge to which writers could respond so long as they felt that Brooks was speaking not only *to* them but also *for* them against the hostile world. Now, however,

that he speaks as one who has little understanding of their experiences, now that he speaks almost *ex cathedra* and certainly as a Leading Critic, his strictures sound to the younger novelists and poets like the invectives of the reactionaries and Philistines. De Voto need not worry about the influence of Van Wyck Brooks on the writers of the forties—and that, to my way of thinking, is a pity.

If our writers are immature, it will take more than harsh words from Brooks to make them grow up, nor can they achieve "fellowship from within" at the command of De Voto. It is, anthropologists tell us, characteristic of human beings everywhere to desire the support of a group, and only within a group can the individual find fulfilment. If so many of our writers feel themselves alienated from the society in which they were born, are we to put the blame on their wilfulness? Sometimes and to some extent, yes. But only after we have taken into account the possibility that our society is in a phase of disintegration.

I can sympathize with Brooks's impatience with certain of our critics and even with his rejection of some of the values of such men as Proust and Joyce; but when he implies that we would be better off if *The Remembrance of Things Past* and *Ulysses* had never been written, when he dismisses these books as a mere hangover from the 1890's, I am at a loss to know what has happened to his critical judgment. It is not on that level that the struggle against their false values can fruitfully be conducted.

"I wonder," De Voto wrote in an essay that attacked Brooks, "if health as well as intelligence is not on the side that common sense instinctively chooses, the side that takes literature as it is and works with it in its own terms, refusing to be omniscient about what it ought



to have been." Taken literally, this could mean the negation of criticism, but there is a sense in which it is the soundest of advice—advice that De Voto would have done well to heed when he wrote *The Literary Fallacy*. I, too, have sometimes erred in refusing to take literature as it is, but I have sworn to do better in the future. And there is Malcolm Cowley, who also has gone astray from time to time and has been soundly paddled by De Voto for doing so. Cowley seems to have reformed; at least his piece on Ernest Hemingway in a recent *New Republic* is a beautiful example of what can be accomplished when a sensitive critic tries to see what a talented author is really doing; and it makes De Voto's pages on Hemingway seem not merely wrong but shamefully obtuse and shallow.

Brooks pointed out to us, twenty-five

years ago, the difficulties of the artist in a depersonalized society. Does he think that society has become better integrated in this quarter-century? At this point in our civilization, detachment—detachment in the worst sense, in the sense of bewilderment, aching loneliness, futility—is the characteristic of whole classes, whole races, even whole nations. Like these people, the writers cannot go home again. We grow impatient, for we know so well what we want the writers to do: we want these pathfinders of society to show us smooth, broad highways to the homelands we cannot find for ourselves. They would satisfy us if they could; but in the meantime, being writers, they make what they can of their wanderings, and we are foolish if we let our impatience keep us from discovering and enjoying and profiting from whatever it is they make.

## Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Heroine

MILDRED WILSEY<sup>1</sup>

IN THE early part of the nineteenth century a little girl indulged herself in the happy task of keeping a journal. She called it *Glimpses into My Own Life and Literary Character* and, intermingling her account with poetic effusions, recorded such illuminating descriptions of herself as the following:

My mind is naturally independant and spurns that subserviency of opinion which is generally considered necessary to feminine softness. But this is a subject on which I must always feel strongly, for I feel within me an almost proud consciousness of independance which prompts me to defend my opinions and to yield them only to conviction!!!

The writer was Elizabeth Barrett, and she was fourteen years old. As the years

progressed, she was to become even more certain of her right to mental integrity and even more indignant at the false generalizations concerning women which were sanctioned by her times. For the Victorians, though they encouraged a spirit of energetic helpfulness suited to the new humanitarianism, still made it clear that woman's activities should exist only as an aid to man's, as a supplement or prop to masculine endeavors. The sensitiveness and frailty which were the feminine standards in the preceding century were somehow to remain, their soft outlines visible beneath a new and more serviceable dress. And, while it is true that many were calling attention to woman's legal and political im-

<sup>1</sup> Wilson College, Chambersburg, Pa.

potence and, still more, to her inadequate education, while it is also true that numbers of isolated heroines were leading out into "the sexless sphere of disinterested intelligence," the opposition remained exceedingly stubborn. Those in authority continued to regard women as potential wives and mothers rather than as human beings. The Queen herself was representative of the current suspicion of the unwomanly.

Tennyson's *Princess*, though recognizing the problem, was hardly a solution. Modern critics have gleefully remarked that this poet's feminism began in a picnic and ended in a wedding bell; that, for all his lovely rhetoric, he offered women merely the fashionable surrender to masculine supremacy. His contemporary, Mrs. Browning, was equally sensitive to the incompleteness of his answer and to his implied underestimate of her sex. Tennyson, though recognizing woman's desire to be of use in the world, had little understanding of her need to assert herself, independent of man, as an individual soul. In 1856 the poetess completed her own "princess"—a narrative poem of far greater length than Tennyson's, by name, *Aurora Leigh*. In manner and form it was unlike anything other poets of her sex were producing. Above all, it was essentially autobiographic, filled with cherished opinions and vivid emotions to be found also in the poetess's letters. Clearly, it was written by the same child who had felt so proud an independence at fourteen. Clearly, too, by the woman whom experience had deepened. The narrative itself, however, was pure fiction. Its body, though solid, was unreal. It is a fascinating study to unweave the spirit from the body and so watch the creation of Mrs. Browning's heroine.

As the story opens, Aurora, the child

of Italian and English parents, has been orphaned and left to the mercies of a conservative English aunt. She grows up under the system of education approved for women at that time. Her mind is dulled by the routine of domestic duties, the shallow memorizing of useless facts, the elaborate trimmings of little social accomplishments. Her spirit droops like a caged bird. In self-defense she escapes into a world of her own, the world of the imagination, of books, and of nature. Here she finds happiness until quite suddenly the future leaps upon her. There arise new situations—a proposal of marriage from Romney, her socialist cousin, the catastrophe of her aunt's death and her own consequent homelessness—a series of crises which forces her out into the open to answer the questions no longer of the Victorian girl but of the Victorian woman.

Romney's proposal of marriage startles Aurora to revolt. Against his one-sided belief in a practical philanthropy, she fights armed with the sword of art. Against his male egotism, she struggles for her integrity as a woman. The two battles are closely interwoven. It is the naïve spectacle of Aurora's crowning herself as poet, for instance, that gives Romney courage to think her but an imaginative child whose intellectual bent need not frighten him. From this moment on, he successfully blunders his way into being definitely rejected. His desire to protect his love from the world's defilement, his discouragement of her potential usefulness as a poet, his proposal of a partnership in a socialistic career so that her energies may supplement his—all this excites Aurora's pride to an outburst. So little does Romney understand that he misconstrues her anger as a woman's desire to be worshiped supinely rather than to be treated as an equal.



His apology and new proposal to marry under her own conditions unfortunately come too late, and, after a vain "cousinly" offer to provide for her poverty out of his own surplus fortune, he retires, defeated in love, into the absorbing whirlpool of socialism. As for Aurora, she takes her risk. With Romney's unfortunate disparagement of "women's verses," "women's dreams," echoing in her ears, she enters her own career as woman poet.

Such plot material goes far and wide from representing any actual events in the life of Mrs. Browning. Rather, it clearly reflects her beloved occupation—that of reading novels. But autobiographic elements are by no means lacking. As a child, Mrs. Browning resembled her heroine in her dislike of the womanly arts and in her passionate devotion to books. At twelve she had read Mary Wollstonecraft and dreamed of running away to be Byron's page. Like Aurora, her most vivid experiences, both as child and as woman, were in the life of mind and soul. "The word 'literature,' " she once wrote Browning, "has, with me, covered a good deal of liberty as you must see . . . real liberty which is never inquired into." In this way, she escaped the dishonorable submission to patriarchy which was the lot of her brothers.

Mrs. Browning had in her mother an illustration of repressed personality. Quite tenderly but frankly she described her as "a nature harrowed up into some furrows by the pressure of circumstances. . . . A sweet gentle nature, which the thunder a little turned from its sweetness. . . . One of those women who never can resist; but, in submitting and bowing on themselves, make a mark, a plait, within,—a sign of suffering. Too womanly she was—it was her only fault."

Again, in a home so largely made up of men, the invalid daughter and sister must also have found it difficult to believe in herself. On one occasion, when she had been laughed out of writing a poem for the Corn League through such masculine gibes as "party poet" and "woman's verses," her self-reproach was acute. In her own words, she suffered like another Prometheus and was full of lamentations for having been persuaded to dream rather than to do. In general, she was impatient with that type of male who expected women to hang their heads like lilies and be defended by the strong around them; shrewdly, she suspected that such an attitude was not one of adoration but of contempt. The deference and protection which she received in her own home never blinded her to her real position. After it was clear that the Barrett fortune had been lost, she was nervous and depressed at being kept in ignorance of her father's plans; in other words, it seemed hard to her that nothing of her childhood except its tranquillity should have passed away. And, after her elopement with Browning, she was grieved by the attitude of her brothers, which showed plainly that they thought she had been foolishly persuaded beyond her powers of resistance. Little did they realize that it was Browning alone who gave her a sense of true protection, because he alone recognized her right to liberty as a responsible and single being.

The poetess was like her character Aurora in her desire to be judged impersonally. Throughout her career she sought to maintain her relationship with critics on a professional basis. The best compliment that could be paid her, she said, was truth, without reference to either sex or friendship. Most interesting, of course, is the expression of this desire to Browning. In a letter of February,

1845, asking that the usual gallantries toward women be dispensed with, she wrote: "You will find me an honest man on the whole." A year later she was endeavoring to remind him of the platonic origin of their correspondence, somewhat hopelessly, it is true.

But the explanation for Mrs. Browning's feminism does not lie solely in her reading or in her own experience. She drew also on the personalities of certain strong-minded contemporaries. Although intellectually free and well inured to loneliness of spirit, she was never, like her heroine Aurora, forced into complete self-reliance. The cage door which flew open for her with marriage brought the sight of foreign lands and new risks of the body and spirit, but still there was always near her the security of a proved affection. In temperament, too, she was lacking in the belligerent pride and in the coldness of will with which she endowed her heroine. In what women, if not in herself, could she have found suggestions for these attributes?

It is remembered how Mary Wollstonecraft was worshiped by the poetess in her early years. Indeed, *The Rights of Women*, published in the century preceding, was to establish for all times the essential doctrine of the feminist movement and to appeal to all women searching for freedom. It was she who first spoke of women's bird-cage lives, who resented their lack of education and willed for them the consciousness of their integrity. Some years later Elizabeth Barrett was exchanging letters with another feminist—Harriet Martineau. This friendship, it seems, had nothing to do with Miss Martineau's social or political doctrines but was inspired solely by her views on mesmerism and the courage with which she faced down public attack.

The poetess, in whom love of the chivalric was always strong, regarded such defiance as the symbol of something greater—of woman's whole struggle to maintain her convictions against a mocking world. Here was a kind of modern Godiva and "the most manlike woman in three kingdoms."

Much more intimate a friend was Mrs. Anna Jameson, also thoroughly "emancipated" according to the standards of the day. Thrown on her own resources through separation from her husband, she had established herself in letters as a writer on art, travel, and "the woman question," her opinions on this last being immensely stimulating to contemporary thought. Under her active pen, England was accused of talking one thing and doing another, of sentimentally clinging to the tradition of woman's purity and tenderness while allowing the facts of her degradation under the new economics to go unchallenged. The stupidity and selfishness which blocked all efforts at reform she scornfully condemned. Education, of course, was the crying need. Without it, woman had no place in a complex civilization, nor could she be a responsible human being.

Besides her interest in such as these, it is to be remembered that in Paris, Florence, and other cities on the Continent the poetess, now married, had numerous opportunities to come in touch with that new and exciting thing, "the young bachelor woman"—artists of all sorts, musicians, writers, painters, independent in their dress and style of living. Back in England, dear Miss Mitford opened her eyes quite wide as she commented on her younger friend's new associates: "She has taken a fancy to an American female sculptor,—a girl of twenty-two,—a pupil of Gibson's, who

goes with the rest of the fraternity of the studio to breakfast and dine at a cafe, and yet keeps her character."

But more than any of the new knight-hood, George Sand, for the massiveness of her work and the dominance of her personality, compelled Mrs. Browning's homage. Her "shamelessness" was excused as that of a fallen angel; she was but a great woman tired of her womanhood, possessing "a breadth and scope of faculty which women want—magnanimous and loving the truth and loving the people." During the long, weary days on Wimpole Street the invalid awaited the appearance of each novel avidly and often amused herself with the delightful vision of sending the French writer one of her own poems in exchange for a letter. It was natural that the Brownings, during their winter's residence in Paris (1851-52), should have sought an introduction. The occasion of the meeting was fraught with emotion: "She [George Sand] received us very kindly, with hand stretched out, which I, with a natural emotion (I assure you my heart beat) stooped and kissed, when she said quickly, 'Mais non, je ne veux pas,' and kissed my lips."

There are interesting resemblances between George Sand's personality and that of Mrs. Browning, such as, for instance, an acknowledged lack of logic and precision and an inclination toward melancholy and mysticism. It is significant that Mrs. Browning was drawn to the French writer by such attributes as a love of masculine dress, an abhorrence of female coquetry, a desire to be "gamin" and "camarade" to all her friends regardless of sex. More important still, Mrs. Browning saw in this writer one who taught that literature should be idealization and sentiment founded on

the realistic—an aesthetic creed which she herself approved wholeheartedly, particularly during the conception of *Aurora Leigh*. Again, here was one who proved it possible to be both a great artist and a true woman; to do a man's work without losing one's natural emotions! George Sand's important position made such success highly conspicuous and symbolized for Mrs. Browning an adjustment which gifted women everywhere and for all time would endeavor to make.

*Aurora Leigh* is composed, then, of the heroines of fiction, of Elizabeth Barrett herself, and of certain living women who fought the prejudices of their time. She is particularly the exponent of the gifted artist, the woman of temperament and imagination, struggling for professional recognition and self-expression. There is a second heroine in the story whose fate illustrates still other problems of contemporary womanhood.

After Romney, the lover, despairs of winning *Aurora* for his wife, he snatches from ruin an innocent and flower-like young vagrant, Marian Erle, finds her work as a seamstress, and establishes her self-respect. Her worship of him has touching and restorative effects on his own heart, and, out of a fanatic and tender hope of symbolizing the union between their two worlds, Romney offers her marriage. Through the villainy of a rival, the wedding never takes place. At the very hour of the ceremony the bride is abducted. Miseries fall fast upon her and are not ended until she has known rape, exile, and forlorn embitterment. Then, miraculously, with the birth of her child, there comes complete spiritual recovery. From this experience, Marian emerges for the first time complete, a whole being, healed of the world's abuse,



untroubled even by any emotional dependence on Romney. Indeed, at the end of the story, her self-sovereignty surpasses that of the now lonely and repentant Aurora.

What foundation in life has this part of the story? Again, there is no factual truth to its events. Presumably the only contact Mrs. Browning ever had with "low life" was during one breathless excursion into the London slums in pursuit of her dog Flush. The lurid narrative was undoubtedly stimulated by an ardent absorption of contemporary stories. The reviewers were quick to seize upon Marian Erle, pointing with distaste to the vulgarity of her experiences and the unreality of the character in general. Mrs. Browning, though sensitive to their implication that she was a borrower from novels, was fully prepared to be charged with immodesty—to be, as she expressed it, "put in the stocks and pelted with eggs." Why had she used such material? She defended herself for it thus. It was not simply that by using it she upheld the right of art to the whole province of truth, nor that, through Marian, she could drive home the cause of the unprivileged woman and condemn the neglect which made her lot so pitiable. In her own words comes other justification for this material: "Marian had to be dragged through the uttermost debasement of circumstances to arrive at the sentiment of personal dignity. I am sorry but indeed it seemed necessary." Thus again, as with Aurora, the poetess stressed the right of woman to self-realization. And, again, in Marian's worship of Romney, and in her love for her child, it is the poetess's own heart speaking.

For there is nothing narrowly feminist in Mrs. Browning. The poem ends in the lyric exaltation of Romney and Aurora, newly blessed in mutual love. There are

concessions on both sides; Romney is converted to the cause of the woman artist, and Aurora admits the artist's need of the affections. It has been Marian's part not only to reinforce the theme of self-discovery demonstrated earlier in the artistic triumphs of Aurora but to illustrate the self-forgetfulness of love.

The relation of Robert Browning to the composition of his wife's most ambitious poem is fitting epilogue to this study. In the years of his courtship, which corresponded, incidentally, with those of the poem's genesis, he was admired by the poetess for his great "objectivity." He was observed wistfully for his "gestures of language and intonation" so different from her own. To herself, Elizabeth Barrett seemed one-sided, a mere dreamer, a blind sort of poet, without experience, without hope of progress—a great guesser at human nature. Slowly, as her intentions for her verse-novel gathered shape, she tried to describe them. It was her hope to write a poem that would upset the conventions and meet "face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age." Browning answered her with his usual quick enthusiasm:

The poem you propose to make for the times; the fearless fresh living work you describe, is the only *Poem* to be undertaken now by you or anyone that is a Poet at all; the only reality, only effective piece of service to be rendered God and man; it is what I have been all my life intending to do, and now shall be much, much nearer doing, since you will along with me.

Here was surely encouragement. It is possible that Mrs. Browning may even have absorbed something of her husband's bolder manner. Browning's inclusion of the monstrous as well as the beautiful, his bold face-to-face attitude toward the real, vulgar though it might be, was always before his wife during the

years of the poem's composition. Frequent descriptions in the *Aurora Leigh*, overrobust, sometimes brutally anatomical, an occasional rugged accent in the dialogues—these and other features suggest an unnatural masculinity. Such influence Mrs. Browning herself would not have denied. Writing one year before her death, she said: "For me, if I have attained anything of force and freedom by living near the oak, the better for me."

"But I hope," she added, "you don't think that I mimic him or lose my individuality." Loss of independence, indeed, seems never to have been the result. Reference to the manuscript shows that Browning first read the poem only as it was being transcribed for the print-

er. From their own testimony it appears that in all their work both poets cultivated strict habits of solitude as the essential condition for good results. Browning's encouragement and example never became domination. His influence, far from hampering, seems to have been but an open door. In her own story Elizabeth Barrett Browning found that marriage did not stultify the "proud consciousness" of her identity but helped to liberate it. The Victorian prejudice against the freedom of women was thus answered by the poem that was written and by the life behind the poem, with no casting-out of matrimony, with no denial of the womanly, though with certain bold clarifications of what these words might mean.

## *A Philosophy of War: The Outlook of Robinson Jeffers*

HENRY W. WELLS<sup>1</sup>

FROM the war fronts of the world today come vividly written records by participants in unprecedented battles by land, sea, and air. Although many of these reports are unexcelled for sheer vigor by the epics of the past, they almost invariably lack the inwardness of poetry or artistic literature. They leave the mind or spirit with little or no reflective understanding of the shocking events whose surface manifestations they depict. The general tendency of late-nineteenth-century authors toward a somewhat naïve realism has become accentuated in twentieth-century literature dealing with this overpowering material. The artist is vanquished by his subject,

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and once again things ride mankind. Most war novels are qualitatively similar to war journalism; while even the poets, from whom something more serious might be expected, have suffered from the limitations of their environment. Of the poets of the last war, Wilfred Owen, to be sure, was slightly more imaginative than Siegfried Sassoon; but, on the whole, the reactions of both are highly physical rather than moral or spiritual. A converse reaction has been exhibited by T. S. Eliot, who makes it clear that he deliberately turns his back upon war and his face toward ancient, unchanging altars of traditional religion. The democracies have relatively little to place beside the popular war songs of their Russian allies or the loud war propa-



ganda of their common foes. Throughout our entire world the deeper tones are seldom heard. Yet the mind demands a consideration of insistent problems: How does war affect the view of life held by soldiers or by civilians nearer or farther from the fronts? How does it influence popular religion or philosophy?

We who live during the greatest of wars seem to have assimilated the meaning of war least successfully. It is easy to make contrasts unfavorable to ourselves. Thus well before the Napoleonic struggles William Blake meditated on war and both as poet and as painter expressed himself on the subject with an imaginative force seldom approached by twentieth-century artists. He placed war in his imaginative scheme of life, reflecting on its relation to nature, society, religion, and art. There is magnificence even in his pithy aphorisms, while his sketches of belligerent demons and their victims achieve some of the most brilliant of artistic allegories. He has had few successors.

To a writer of verse, and unhappily to a writer not very widely read, one turns in America for the liveliest imaginative and philosophical understanding of the tragedy in which virtually the entire world discovers itself. And it is typical of disjointed times that Robinson Jeffers shows as remarkable obtuseness upon some phases of this subject as uncommon insight upon others.

Known somewhat more widely to American readers in the West than in the East, he is author of a dozen substantial volumes of poetry written since 1914 and embracing nearly a score of long poems as well as a far greater number of lyrics. His power is incontestable. From practically the beginning of his career the war theme has fascinated him. Although, unlike Stephen Benét, he has written no

martial epic—and he had a theologian for a father whereas Benét had a general—war has signified more to him than to almost any American poet since Whitman and has meant almost as much to him as to the war-minded young poet from England, W. H. Auden. That in his major works Jeffers often treats war obliquely by no means indicates that it holds a minor interest for him. The superficial detachment of the mountains of California has afforded him an ampler perspective upon the trials which Owen and Sassoon endured in the trenches of Flanders and Europeans today suffer in their air-bombed cities. During the first World War and immediately thereafter, life crowded upon Jeffers with its deepest meanings, evoking his first mature literary reflection of life. Previous to that war his verse gave small indication of any unusual sensitivity or promise. During the war years he married, had two children, and settled both his life and mind in the courses which they have since followed. He began for the first time to digest his wide reading and seriously conducted studies in almost all fields with the very notable exceptions of economics and contemporary politics. He acquired a conversant knowledge of biology, botany, physics, chemistry, astronomy, philosophy, history, theories of history, anthropology, psychology, Greek, Latin, and English literatures, as well as medieval and especially medieval Teutonic culture, and the more modern French and German. He became equally at home in the pages of Aeschylus and Baudelaire. Contemporary literature he gathered almost imperceptibly in his stride, becoming no one's disciple but sharing much in common at one point or another with such diverse authors as D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and T. S. Eliot. This highly intellectual life

which Jeffers cultivated was profoundly shaken by the war of 1914-18. Immediately war itself became the focus for a large part of his restless thinking and sensitive feeling. It unquestionably increased the savageness and luridness of the poet's images and deepened his thirst for mystic peace. He viewed the subject of war broadly, philosophically, and imaginatively, not, as so many of his less widely informed contemporaries, narrowly, impressionistically, and journalistically. As a true poet he envisaged war in terms of what he deemed "the politics of eternity."

Almost all his long poems are narratives with a military background. Most of them are tales of violent domestic tragedy on the coast of California among persons who have in some way been scarred by the contemporary conflict in Europe. A sex struggle is enacted against a background of international strife. In his earlier poems men leave for war; in the narratives of his middle period soldiers return from war; while in the most recent poems the second merely replaces the first World War. Several times in his last volume, *Be Angry at the Sun*, the heated action of a poem is expanded in significance by the droning of a war-burdened radio. Scores of short poems deal directly and ably with the war theme. One of the best of his early achievements, for example, is a sonnet sequence, "The Truce and the Peace," written on the occasion of the Armistice of 1918. From this period comes his narrative, "The Coast-Range Christ," where the struggle is between a mystic, who is also a pacifist and a conscientious objector, and a woman stirred by frenzied and most militant patriotism. The more recent "Bowl of Blood," a verse drama, even introduces Hitler under a thinly disguised incognito. In his Preface

to *Be Angry at the Sun* he apologizes for the preponderance of topical verse, almost entirely of a war-minded nature. The presence of allegory representing a world at war is nowhere more apparent than in "Mara," the chief poem in this book. Two brothers, rivals for the same woman, suggest to the reader two imperial nations contending for the world's material treasures, while Mara, or the impersonal, ideal world, is glimpsed as merely a haunting wraith. This noble conception Jeffers, unhappily, does not fully realize in his poem. Better received by the critics have been such brief and thoughtful war lyrics as the early "Shine, Perishing Republic":

While this America settles in the mould of its  
vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire,  
And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass,  
pops and sighs out, and the mass hardens.  
....

Jeffers, the determinist, views war first of all through the eyes of biology and scientific materialism. If he ends with mysticism, he begins with science, leaving historical theory to fill in the middle spaces. Grimly the heir of Darwin, he sees all matter as engaged in a struggle for existence, although he recognizes no comforting thought that higher forms survive. History merely repeats in human terms the struggle demonstrated by the natural sciences. Wars between nations follow from wars within the atom. Thus history for Jeffers records primarily those violent conflicts whereby again and again a younger culture expels an older one, as in the myth Cronus slew Uranus, and Zeus overcame Cronus. Human society re-enacts the patricidal tragedy of Oedipus and Laius. Jeffers' most extensive treatment of his ideas of the cycles of history are to be found in two long poems, "At the Fall of an Age," presenting the decline of Homeric cul-

ture, and "At the Birth of an Age," presenting the rise of a Germanic domination inspired by Christianity and erected upon the ruins of Rome. At Chalons and beside the banks of the Marne, Attila, one of the chief characters in "At the Birth of an Age," met his doom; and in all Jeffers' references to this defeat of the Huns he is moved by a later battle fought upon the same ground. Another poem, "The Loving Shepherdess," is evidence of his belief that a Christian or compassionate conception of the universe is wholly contradicted by history and by nature and that man should accordingly accept and not resist this cosmic immorality. The same views of war and race he treats more succinctly in a very large number of lyrics.

The poet is so far a naturalist that, although dealing with human nature, he places no value upon ethics, civilization, or society. Basically an anarchist and a primitivist, he champions the individual who is sometimes the passive mystic and sometimes the fiery belligerent. The independent-minded warrior appears in the lustier, ascending stage of human evolution, inevitably followed by a decadent stage dominated in turn by empire, wealth, luxury, and effeminacy. Empire, imperialism, impersonal warfare he especially dislikes. Since he acknowledges no social values, patriotism has virtually no meaning for him. He avows a preference for private violence. He resembles a gunman periodically restrained by a philosophical pacifism. The poet very learnedly favors a small-town variety of warfare. America was, for Jeffers, a relatively sound country so long as men fought with one another. He especially dislikes the spectacle of overseas wars. At times he writes as an ardent isolationist. But his pacifism is short lived. Being a determinist and a

pessimist, he accepts international war as inevitable and views it with a somewhat morose objectivity based upon his mechanistic conception of history and the universe. While the customary morality condones the mass crime of war and condemns private violence, Jeffers tends to condone private crime and to rebuke the warmakers. But if he is at times hostile to belligerent politics, for sheer belligerency itself his personality, if not his metaphysics, has led him to offer many apologies.

Studies in science and history have, then, proved by no means the only aids to his tragic and fatalistic acceptance of war. The personal equation cannot be overlooked. Jeffers possesses a temperament overcharged with violence and even at hot war within itself. Like the heroine in his "Roan Stallion," he slays his own self-created deity. In keeping with the character of his self-tormenting universe, he has a Mars-like quality of nourishing himself upon strife. Several of his poems are virtually self-satire. The composition of "The Women at Point Sur," his longest narrative, must, for example, have involved self-mutilation, since Barclay, the central figure in this work, is, like Jeffers, a seeker after a naturalistic God and a failure because, again like the poet, he addresses the multitude. Jeffers considers that Barclay as far as he went was right in his metaphysics but stumbled upon destructive emotionalism while striving to influence his fellow-men. The two most inconsistent aspects of the poet's personality as revealed in his books are, obviously, a profound disposition to violence in emotion and action and an equal disinclination from all violence and a devotion to an ultimate, mystical repose. These contradictory aspects the poet symbolizes in a revealing lyric, "Rock and



Hawk," where, as usual, the rock signifies mystic repose, the hawk, heroic action. Seen in a full-length panel, this discrepancy produces his long lyric drama, "The Tower beyond Tragedy," in which the early tragic scenes outdo Aeschylus in dwelling upon the horrors of the House of Atreus, the later metaphysical passages outdo Pascal in voicing the doctrine of rest which is annihilation. The maelstrom of action, the nirvana of quietism, receive equal and paradoxical exposition in the poet's verses. Virtually all his long poems begin with an apparent glorification of extreme violence and force and end with a vigorous condemnation of all action and an obeisance to mystic quietism. They commence with teeming life and conclude with frozen death. In "Dear Judas" the disturbing and dynamic Jesus comes first, the pacific and corpse-like Lazarus comes last. The central figures are almost always melodramatic or Marlovian supermen or superwomen: as Tamar, California, Peace O'Farrell, Clytemnestra, Barclay, Cawdor, Thurso, Lance, Gudrun, Madrone, Barbara Howren, and Bruce Ferguson. All these characters are in the end failures—but noble and heroic failures. Their magnificence in their heroic struggles impresses us as much as the lesson of mysticism which the poet so obviously wishes us to learn from their defeat. The cleavage between his own values yawns before us; in the pit of the abyss he undergoes his own passion.

The reader receives the inescapable impression that the extremes to which the poet goes are organically related, as action and reaction, storm and calm: violence and excessive quiet demanding each other as compensation. If the world were really as Jeffers describes it, very possibly mysticism would be the only re-

course. Speaking from a therapeutic point of view, he repeatedly declares that he creates imaginary horrors to propitiate man's fatal disposition to actual violence and that bad dreams are at least a small aid in achieving a desirable truce. But this reasoning seems partial, especially since the poet as often praises the hawk as the rock. A true ascetic, he flourishes in both climates, the tempest and the peace. The psychologist who examines the treatment of the Oedipus complex and certain neuroses in Jeffers' poems may best suggest the personal basis for his creed. What alone concerns the present argument directly is that both the pressure that leads to war and the stoical fortitude that withstands its blows receive brilliant expression at his hands. No writer is by temperament better qualified to expound the violence of war and the calm fortitude of warriors and of the most heroic of their victims. The divided personality from which Jeffers suffers creates both the tension needed to produce his art and a most sympathetic treatment of two major themes never more in demand than in the modern world.

A writer as skilful as Jeffers in depicting crimes of private violence naturally possesses some power to comprehend the public crimes of war. His inclination to draw individuals is supplemented by his disposition to think in terms of the mass. He instinctively finds a synthesis of his shrewd psychopathology and his pessimistic view of history. The illness within the atom and the individual is merely extended to the crowd. All his tales of local events assume in his mind, deeply trenched with historical theorizing, some allegorical perspectives. Their incidental allusions to war thus acquire peculiar force, while his lyrics dealing directly with the problem possess exceptional

veracity. Jeffers well knows that war is essentially not ordered battle but pillage, mutilation, rape, murder, and sudden or lingering death. He thinks luminously on the subject because he sees his theme expansively. War becomes mass violence. Just as water is alike in a drop or an ocean, the destructive force of man turned against man proves the same mystery whether in a local murder or at a Stalingrad.

He successfully imagines the fury of war largely because he successfully imagines the fury of nature. He attempts to describe cosmic energy, evidenced in nature's most untamable and unmerciful forces. With the greatest vigor he depicts earthquakes, fires, storms, days of fierce and blazing heat, the struggles of vegetation, and the epic splendor of predatory animals and birds. He vividly depicts the wars of man upon beast, as in the poisoning of the smaller ground animals and the hunting of mountain lions, savage swine, or deer. None of the more primitive forms of violence fails to leave its scar upon him.

Violence as Jeffers conceives it bears the flower of joy but the fruit of pain. The burning problem is to overcome the pain. For this he has two prescriptions: the mystical and the stoical. Mysticism, essentially the philosophy of the East, offers a transcendental vision. Although Jeffers is sufficiently occidental often to regard nature as a mechanism, his mysticism commonly takes the form of meditation upon nature. In this meditation nature's cruelties are not denied but viewed impersonally instead of personally. Stoicism, a representative philosophy of the West, masters personal pain with bare fortitude. It is obviously an outlook desirable in the soldier or in anyone facing the realities of war. Jeffers' poems contain the entire Senecan doctrine on

pleasure and pain, fortitude and suicide. Not even the Greek or Latin tragic poets dwell more insistently than he upon these themes. The chief masculine character in "Cawdor," like Oedipus, blinds himself and suffers torments of the flesh. Fera, the chief feminine character in the same poem, is equally self-tortured. Jeffers dwells not only upon the physical sufferings of the old and weak but upon those of the young and strong. No men on battlefields or civilians in assaulted towns can experience sharper agonies or writhe in fiercer contortions. Yet they endure bravely. Thus Thurso, chief character in the powerful "Thurso's Landing," is a strong young man who endures injuries that leave him incapacitated from the waist downward. Numerous of Jeffers' men gash their own hands and so remind us of the wounds of Christ and the stigmata of the ascetic Francis. The powers of endurance depicted by Jeffers in bird and beast, man and woman, suggest and are suggested by the bravery of those who endure the furnace of war. No American poet has more consistently celebrated an ideal of elementary courage.

Indeed, Jeffers has almost certainly been driven to an excess in this heroic enterprise. While as a mystic he may decry war, as a lover of heroism he instinctively admires it. He all too clearly turns his back upon the amenities and civilities of cultivated life and takes a belated place in the line of ultraromantic thought leading through Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Wagner, Nietzsche, D. H. Lawrence, and the Fascist Ezra Pound. For the type of culture which flowed in the aristocracies of the eighteenth century he shows not the slightest trace of sympathy. Nor is he a champion of aestheticism, as Blake or Yeats. No thinker renounces civilization, as manifested either



in the Western world or in any other culture, more dramatically than Jeffers. Hence little in humanity remains for him to admire except qualities congenial to a martial life. From time to time he indulges a temporary suspense of his mystical belief. No wonder that on occasions he somewhat awkwardly reveals the militant lion beneath the mystic sheep's clothing:

I am not well civilized, really alien here: trust me not.

I can understand the guns and the air-planes,  
The other conveniences leave me cold.

"We must adjust our economics to the new abundance" . . . .

Of what? Toys: motors, music boxes,  
Paper, fine clothes, leisure, diversion.

I honestly believe (but really an alien here: trust me not)

Blind war, compared to this kind of life,  
Has nobility, famine has dignity.

Be happy, adjust your economics to the new abundance;

One is neither saint nor devil, to wish  
The intolerable nobler alternative.

An alien indeed! Such views come much closer to the teaching of the Axis warlords than to those of enlightened leaders wherever they may be found. Indeed, the fanatical asceticism conspicuous in the propaganda of Japanese and German spokesmen produces statements very similar to those in Jeffers. Many times, as in one of his short poems, "Joy," he observes that neither pleasure nor happiness is an end in life but that life becomes really significant solely through conquest of pain. Obviously, the greatest endurance can follow only the greatest sufferings inflicted, and, if endurance is the pride and goal of life, then some mass cruelty, as war, becomes an essential means in the fullest achievement of this end. As the recompense of war Jef-

fers does not propose an outward or material victory but honors instead an inward and impassive courage. Such are the apologetics taught a servile army by its unscrupulous leaders: a religion designed for the people by a Machiavelli.

If we overlook Jeffers' scorn or neglect of the very bases of civilization, his advocacy of both the aggressive and the passive virtues of militarism may well meet with favor in the eyes of democratic peoples. The democracies boast a stronger power to endure and a keener zest for ultimate victory than their foes. In so far as Jeffers lays spiritual foundations for a virile, militant, and victorious people he must be held a socially useful writer in America. Thus far he is neither decadent nor reactionary. But if Jeffers stands among the spiritual leaders who may aid in winning a war, he also holds with those who may lose a peace. His belief in a mechanistic universe is, on the whole, outmoded and full of the most vicious consequences. A Neo-Calvinistic determinist, an arch-materialist and pessimist, he assumes war to be a normal feature of social life and not a pathological feature. Always regarding peace with the eyes of a defeatist, he shows nothing but open scorn for all forces and ideas that may check, even if they fail to annul, this menace. While, as an isolationist, he opposed America's entrance into the present war, as a Nietzschean he is far more favorable than unfavorable to the general cause of war. His mysticism proves here less powerful than his celebration of sheer energy.

In addition to being an admirable poet, Jeffers is a vigorous and notable thinker. His celebration of energy and fortitude is in certain respects timely and praiseworthy. But he also is heir to a largely Germanic philosophy of violence directly opposed to the civilized doc-

trines more native to other European lands. To him war is too often a positive social good; the primitive virtues too often surpass the civilized virtues; he is too sophisticatedly fascinated by the horrors of war; and it is primarily these very horrors which, like the head of Medusa, have turned his humanity into alien stone. As he falls victim to the crudest form of the doctrine of the superman, the more genial and generous, the saner and brighter elements in his human nature become atrophied. He leads his readers to mystical complacency in a world of unending wars and military tyrannies. Jeffers is a giant with a Janus head. One face looks menacingly toward the night,

the other heroically toward the day. The broadly epic and heroic Jeffers we must admire; the narrowly Teutonic and cynical Jeffers we may seriously deplore. American literature demands more of his morally invigorating qualities; it has hitherto suffered only incidentally from his morally enervating qualities, where realism degenerates into pessimism and sternness into brutality. With vigilant watch such ultraromantic blemishes may be kept away from American thought as successfully as they have of late been warded off from British thought. Jeffers' poetry offers an admirable test of both our moral and intellectual integrity.

## *The Baseless Fabric of "Basic" Criticism*

ALFRED D. SHEFFIELD<sup>1</sup>

I MEAN no scoff at the author in *Harp-er's* for March of "How Basic Is Basic English?" Mr. Flesch, like myself and others, is being stirred by the idea of a global interlanguage to inspect the semantic inwards of successful "interthinking." This is a mental effort not without risk, since, feeling quite at home with words, we may assert more about their subtler doings than we can stand by. When we turn the mind in upon its own medium, we put ourselves with the little girl who, told to "think before you speak," pleaded "How do I know what I think till I see what I say?"

What Mr. Flesch says is that a successful interlanguage must be a *simple* language and that Basic's way of condensing its vocabulary makes it "literally

impossible to be simple." That is, it eliminates verbs, and "verbs make for simplicity"; and its restricted word list hampers the speaker or writer with gaps that drive him to labored circumlocutions.

Unless there is some catch here in the assumptions, the criticism sounds serious. The author is honestly aware that much turns on what we mean by "simplicity." His own research in a "Readability Laboratory" resulted in a formula for simple language, and in rules to attain it; namely, one must prefer—

Sentences to clauses,  
Word-order to word-forms (for showing word-relations),  
Verbs to nouns and nouns to adjectives,  
Words about people to words about things.

As tests for a plain style these are at least objective and definite. The following passage from William Faulkner meets them all:

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Miss Reba moved heavily from big thigh to thigh, the two dogs moiling underfoot.

"Oh God, oh God," she said. The dogs surged out and hurled themselves toward the door in a mad scramble. As they rushed past she turned and flung the tankard at them. It struck the door jamb, splashed up the wall, and rebounded with a clatter. She drew her breath whistling; her mouth gaped, shaping the hidden agony of her thwarted lungs.

"We was happy as two doves," she wailed, choking. "Then he had to go and die on me!"

Energy and vividness this certainly has, with its short sentences and one-syllable nouns and verbs. Yet Bonamy Dobrée, who quotes it in his *Modern Prose Style*, does not view it as "plain." It is richly charged with feeling-elements, which compose a whole that pulses with little shocks of contrast. And one notes that its sound-patterns and overtones of meaning are partly the work of verb-synonyms: *surged, rushed—hurled, flung*. Its reader is addressed as one who knows their niceties, who can respond not only to *hurl* and *fling* but to *cast, pitch, toss*, and *sling*—all meaningful variants on the idea of "throw" or (in Basic) *send through the air*. Words like *fling* (which conveys not only the bare idea of "throw" but also something of the manner, the force, and the emotional impulse) give speech a richness of texture (more is said with less of it), but the resulting economy of syllables bespeaks a relish of plural meanings taken in at one stroke. The style is *packed* for imaginative effects in minds that have matured their literary perceptions. But we must still ask whether such a style is really *simple*.

Distinctions such as this enter into any judgment on the requisites of a secondary interlanguage. If millions of persons with all diversities of native tongue are to take on an extra linguistic accomplishment, there must be some simplify-

ing of its demands. The question is: "Simplifying for just what?" One aim must be to *encourage learners* by shortening the span of thankless effort before ability to read and express one's self brings its own reward. This calls for a minimum vocabulary—of words that combine to say the most things, not merely that are met the most times. Another aim must be to get its special efficiencies *at levels of significant intercultural concern*. The level of literary art would be too high for any but international élites. The level suggested by Mr. Flesch seems too humble: he rates Basic by its words for animals, articles of diet, and household furnishings. The level that Basic presupposes was correctly remarked by Mr. Churchill as that of "transactions of practical business and interchange of ideas." Before arguing whether it "simplifies" in the second sense ("uses words good at saying things important to say"), we might see in two passages just what Basic does at levels of business and intellectual concern. The first is a letter from a collection of sixty made by S. L. Salzedo, covering a wide range of matters in international trade:

#### (REQUEST FOR DETAILS)

DEAR SIRs,

Will you be kind enough to give us some help?

Our exchange has gone so low that it seems wise for us to make an attempt to get supplies of certain goods for which there is a good and regular sale in this market from countries which have gone off gold, and not from our normal places of supply.

We are forced to make our request to you because there is no Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in your town from which to get trade details in the normal way. It will be very kind of you if you will give us the names and addresses of responsible business houses of good position which are producers (not agencies or middlemen) of these goods in different qualities, cheap and better makes, but not priced very high, keeping in mind that goods which are



pleasing to the eye have a great attraction for purchasers here.

Hoping that you will not be greatly troubled by this request, we are

Yours truly,

The thoughts here calling for expression are competently put, without awkwardness due to the limited wording. Certain words, indeed, are not the ones most familiar in Anglo-American style: e.g., "places of supply" for *sources*, "details" for *particulars*, "of good position" for *of good standing*. Mr. Flesch will pounce upon "make an attempt" as Basic's failure to use the "simpler" *try*. But *try* and its noun *trial* are only seeming-simple: short and familiar indeed, but hovering in sense between "attempt" and "test" (a *trial* = an attempt the result of which is expected to prove something). Had Basic added *try* to its list, the phrase here would be crisper, but at the cost of a sense-complication to make trouble elsewhere.

The second passage is from *Basic Rules of Reason*, in which I. A. Richards deals (in Basic) with ideas needed for insight into thinking. He is here discussing the words *abstract—concrete*, *general—special*.

There are two ways of taking parts of the sense of a word from the other parts of its sense. An "abstract" thought is (a) of a quality or property taken from the thing which has it; or it is (b) of a thing without the properties which it has. For example, a thought of a leaf as being green, soft, full of folds, from a certain branch, and so on . . . is a "concrete" thought. A thought of it as being only a leaf—as having only what is necessary if it is to be a leaf . . . is the "abstract" thought (b).

A "concrete" or taken-together thought of a thing puts it with a number of *sorts*. It puts this leaf here into the sort of green things, the sort of soft things, the sort of here-and-now things. Every one of these sorts may be more or less "general" (thought of a *group* of things). . . . The word used as an opposite of *general* is *special*. As *some* is to *all*, so *special* is to *general*

in its root sense. . . . We are able to say that "This is green" is less general than "This is colored," because green things are a part of colored things. And the question "How *general* is a thought?" is much more important than the question "How *abstract* is it?"

About this passage one should remark, first, that it is concerned with ideas that are important for educational understandings between peoples of the East and of the West. When a Chinese and an American exchange views over a piece of argument, the former approaches it with a standard of judgment formed by a long tradition of discourse, in which (1) not logical cogency but sententious *suasion* is put first; (2) arguments are answered without being first *analyzed* to expose faulty points in the thought-process; and (3) the expected texture of convincing speech is *concrete*, moving from example to example. The Westerner, on the other hand, with a mind watermarked by assumptions going back to Aristotle, may belittle the argument in terms of imperfect logic, where the Easterner values it for the integrity of its ethics. What both need, for any successful "interchange of ideas," is to become mutually aware of the *sources* of their differences. Professor Richards has here helped them to essential clues.

A second point of remark is that Basic here conveys "simply" (in easy words) ideas that control the *scope* of our references in daily talk, when we "abstract" or "generalize" informally with *any*, *every*, *each*, and *all*. And it succeeds in keeping simple where efforts to be precise often bog down in verbiage. As revision editor on a dictionary I once had to define the word *any*. After working through a whole card-box of quotations, pronouncements, and queries, I appealed to a colleague of some repute for semantic feats. He pondered it awhile, and then gave me the following:



any (pron. adj.). An indeterminate derivative of *one*, indiscriminately distributed.

The definition may be right, but as a help to lay folk it ranks with Dr. Johnson's definition of *net*—"a reticulated fabric with distended interstices."

At this point readers may ask: "Why is it that, for all the evidence of Basic doing so much with so little, its critics keep showing it in Laocoön-like struggle with coils of unrewarding phrase?" One reason is that they always represent it as more restricted than the system calls for. In each special field of discourse—in each science, in government, trade, education, war—the 850-word limit is overpassed by at least 50 words for ideas too distinctive to paraphrase. With a war made a major concern, the Basic speaker would certainly mention *bombs* and not be constrained to such ineptitudes as "hollow balls full of a substance with a tendency to go off with a loud noise."

We must admit, however, that Basic English is not "all things to all men" at all points with equal ease. Its words have been chosen for their power to replace single words of *clustered* meanings with phrases which *deploy* the meanings—much as in music arpeggios deploy chords. The reduction of memorizing thus achieved encourages enough learners to assure the *currency* which an inter-language must have, and the resulting effectiveness is most demonstrable with ideas at some remove from immediate sense experience. Ideas such as "source," "apply" (paraphrased in the business letter above), and "currency," "effectiveness" (just used) gain a needed guaranty of understanding when Basic unravels their component sense-strands. It is not so with ideas of things familiar to sight and touch. In conveying the idea "stool," all we want is to name it. If we have to unravel it into *one-person*

*seat without a back*, we superfluously *describe* where we intend only to *refer*. Basic serves a level of intentions calling for words that will phrase ideas having ingredients *not taken for granted*. Its selective principle favors these at some cost in name-words for gross objects—where the alternative principle admits words for things met the most times. Since a host of things not in its list lie at hand for phraseological stunting, nothing is easier than to exhibit Basic in labor to bring forth mice. Both Mr. Flesch and Miss Rose Macaulay (in the April *Atlantic*) join the critics who make merry over its phrasings for things like purses and pies.

Even here, one should note, the critic judges locutions by the way they sound to native English-speakers who have the repertoire of alternative words. "Has a loss of his money-bag" is a bit quaint to ears familiar with "has lost his purse." But it is not bad English, it tells what has happened and if it is the *sole* means of telling between a Hollander and a Chinese, why is it discredited as *inter-language* merely because they would have heard it slightly otherwise in America? Yet this assumption runs all through Miss Macaulay's "Attack," which is really a defense of "full" English from fancied debasements if part of it is used too analytically by too many. The world may be racked with misunderstandings, but the power of Basic for reconstructive intercourse must be stayed if it threatens the code for *shall* and *will* and other amenities of home-land idiom.

The main point, however, is that a universal tongue for men of all tongues should be judged by the success of its mechanisms as addressed to the purposes it puts first. Basic puts first the clarifying exchange of ideas; and if it succeeds with this, need we be too anxious how it

serves in run-ins of tourists with taximen over lost purses or in table-chat over turkey and pumpkin pie?

I must grant that the critics may be catching Basic off-base when it appears as a translation medium for poetry and prose of concentrated meaningfulness and force. I refer here not to paraphrases done by English-speaking students for practice in perceptive reading. This possibility for Basic is, of course, quite afield from its interlingual role. What is in question is *The New Testament in Basic English* and Mr. Flesch's test of Basic in rendering Shakespeare. The former has claims that require a separate discussion. They relate to a need, felt by national agencies of education in both hemispheres, of addressing a historic scripture through a common world language to the forming of a common moral outlook. But experiments of this kind should not be allowed to suggest that the

promotion of Basic looks to the spread of pallid substitutes for great literature.

The case for Basic English in its central, interlingual functions stands as follows:

1. English already has more speakers, in more parts of the world, than has any other language.

2. As against any fabricated Esperanto, Basic is a real *vestibule* vocabulary opening into a great literature of science, trade, politics, and belles-lettres.

3. It is a medium lexically and grammatically streamlined for a communicative efficiency not approachable in any competing tongue.

The flat, de-emotionalized quality which critics have felt in Basic might be actually salutary in the life of our time. With radio at work night and day, belching propaganda into the homes of the world, the minds of men may be implemented for sanity by a common "nuclear vocabulary of rigorous explicitness" as against all "smuggled appeals to feeling put forth as statements of fact."

## William Saroyan: A Portrait

JOSEPH REMENYI<sup>1</sup>

### I

TO CREATE, stated Henrik Ibsen, means to set judgment upon one's self. This romantic definition of creativeness does not cripple the need of classical balance. By applying Ibsen's definition of creativeness, William Saroyan's works explain much of himself. They reveal an extrovert using writing as a means for his most intense expression; thus he can keep pace with a pragmatic and incongruous world which is rather indifferent to the carefree design of an imaginative fervor. Born thirty-five years ago in

the Fresno section of California, in a home close to a vineyard district, and brought up in Armenian immigrant surroundings, possessing a background that knew strangeness, sorrow, poverty, and joy, his growth was conditioned by emotions and experiences which, without the assistance of his native tenderness, combined with a religious heritage, might have made him a clever cynic in an age of elbow-philosophy and unscrupulous indirectness. Even so, his dexterity and boisterous temper sometimes bring him to the level of destiny's court jester or to that of an emotional materialist of the moment; and the hullabaloo or the sheer claptrap of his

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art and the fact that he is likely to be the Baron Münchhausen of intimate pleasures strengthen one's doubt in his absolute sincerity. His fertile though repetitive imagination should be exhausting to himself; he never runs the risk of being objective. His positive attitude is related to the glory of living. The tone of many of his sketches echoes the voice of the traditional European *feuilleton*; the kind of sketchy short story that Continental newspapers used to publish for the superficial inspiration and entertainment of the readers. Saroyan's "modernity" does not make them less trivial. On the other hand, their suggestiveness makes them artistically somewhat more authentic, though not necessarily more genuine. For example, in one of his better stories, entitled "The Pomegranate Trees," one encounters the following dialogue:

Pomegranates, my uncle said, are practically unknown in this country.

Is that all you're going to plant? I said.

I have in mind, my uncle said, planting several other kinds of trees.

Peach trees? I said.

About ten acres, my uncle said.

How about apricots? I said. . . .

This is, indeed, mannerism with the pretense of naturalness. The "I said" tires one with the same results with which a snob of simplicity ceases to be funny after a certain time. Saroyan suggests a verbal game that makes fun of unaffectedness.

From all this, as a general statement, what conclusion should one reach as to the outstanding traits of this writer? He is an overrated or belittled romanticist; an actor, sometimes a ham actor, impressed with his own histrionic emotionalism, his own parody, but also an uplifter, a moralist who does not dare to preach. He rationalizes the chill of life

with a deceiving tenderness; it is like introducing an oriental lantern into an occidental darkness. In his book entitled *The Modern Short Story*, the English writer H. E. Bates aptly states: "Saroyan is the Eastern carpet-seller in a foreign country armed with the gift of the gab, a packet of psychological conjuring tricks, and a bunch of phoney cotton carpets from which, unexpectedly, he now and then produces a genuine Ispahan." Edmund Wilson in his "The Boys in the Back Room" recognizes the illusionism of Saroyan, in the following manner: "Saroyan takes you to the bar, and he creates for you there a world which is the way the world would be if it conformed to the feelings instilled by drinks." There is warmth in this writer, a communicative emotional heat. Yet his enthusiasm for goodness and sweetness and spiritual nobility is coupled with a confusing irony—his most important gun against a conventional world. Sometimes he has a discerning eyesight; whatever foresight he has it is that of the self-advertiser, the clowning funmaker whose objective seems to compel a colorless and cruel world to succumb to the joyfulness and ingeniousness of a man by the name of William Saroyan.

## II

In referring to Saroyan's romanticism, one is right in asking whether it is exciting because of its artistic merit or because of its too often dwarfish originality. He does not give the impression of an uprooted writer; yet he does not give the impression that he is a writer with roots. His assumed world in which his contrived characters move is only seemingly unassuming. A grimace is likely to be an aggressive defense mechanism. His gadabout sensitiveness seems the godchild of pride which uses humility



and irony for self-realization. He is the Jacobin who plots not against an existing government but against a life that postpones joy and happiness. In his play, *The Time of Your Life*, the following is said: "In the time of your life, live so that in that good time there shall be no ugliness or death for yourself or for any life your life touches." He speaks like a holy Epicurean, and it is important to see the physiognomy of the oppressed spirit in these words; of the spirit that inherited memories of persecution and humiliation, and in whom the reality of freedom (with all its American trimmings) initiated the kind of courage that made him fall in love with life as he thinks it should be lived. He goes to extremes of affirmation, because he thinks that current life in its negation of happiness is even more extreme. His maudlin or nervy infallibility is manifested in glibly expressed advices that he likes to offer to people. It is like playing dice with the obvious. In the postscript of his *Three Plays*, entitled "The One Easy Lesson," Saroyan uses the following cheerful plain talk: "Eat simple food and drink the kind of liquor you seem to like most, and if you see a pretty face, smile and let her know there's still love of poetry in the world. Don't study the books, unless you are still under twenty. If you are under twenty, study *all* the books, but don't forget yourself." One could quote pages from other writings of Saroyan which are as adolescent in their pretentiousness; their dominant characteristics are generalities which show about as much wisdom as if some one would say that water is wet. This reminds me of the diluting method of this writer; there are few "best-seller" writers anywhere who can make of a thin plot or of a superficial situation a story or a situation of "meaning" in the

same manner as it is done by Saroyan. He has a rather quantitative than qualitative talent; too frequently it seems like a travesty of vitality.

Saroyan's romantic outlook consists of three salient motives and manifestations. There is a puzzling Eastern inheritance related to his family, to his childhood, and indirectly to immigrant life in general; there is his definite relationship to our American civilization, as an American without the trace of a foreign accent; and there is his narcissism, his lollipop emotionalism, and his ironic shrewdness which seems the acid test of his immunity to theories, to class discrimination, and to other cumbersome interferences of a practical world. Unfortunately, there is little progress in the maturing judgment of this writer; there is too much disregard of good taste as an artistic and psychological attribute; there is childish indifference to greatness in others, for example, by naming his first novel *The Human Comedy*, considering what this title means to Balzac.

William Saroyan, a cross-breeding of sincerity and twistedness, is especially significant as a sentimentalist in comparison with his American contemporaries who are "hard-boiled" writers. Sherwood Anderson's grotesque sense of intimacy affected him; but today's writers of nonconforming evil and ruthlessness seem outside the orbit of his art. Critics have pointed out that Saroyan's uncompromising attitude about the goodness of human nature is his most conspicuous romantic trait. Even his nonsense sometimes suggests a tender and gentle sense. His affinity with common humanity shows that a wounded heart can make evil useless and goodness useful.

The paradoxical Saroyan understands



the activity of silence; he understands how important truisms are in the life of little people. In this respect he implies some relationship to Chekhov, with the difference, however, that the Russian writer represents maturity in the very best sense of the word, whereas Saroyan's interest in oversimplified psychology shows his incurable adherence to a youthful storm-and-stress level of the mind. Nevertheless, here and there, he knows how to articulate silence in an almost musical sense, indicating sensitiveness that is moving in its effect. For instance, in his sketch entitled "And Man," one meets a faithful expression of youthful loneliness. Of course, by its very nature, a quotation is incomplete in relation to the complete impression of a work of art; yet the following paragraph should prove Saroyan's aptitude for articulating silence.

During the summer I sometimes stopped suddenly before a mirror to look at myself, and after a moment I would turn away, feeling disgusted with my ugliness, worrying about it. I couldn't understand how it was that I looked utterly unlike what I imagined myself to be. In my mind I had another face, a finer, a more subtle and dignified expression, but in the mirror I could see the real reflection of myself, and I could see that it was ugly, thick, bony, and coarse. I thought it was something finer, I used to say to myself. I hadn't bothered before about looking at myself. I had thought that I knew precisely how I looked, and the truth distressed me, making me ashamed. Afterwards I stopped caring. I am ugly, I said. I know I am ugly. But it is only my face.

The sketch begins with the admission that the confessor was fifteen and ends with the following utterance of self-mastery:

I had seen the universe, quietly in the emptiness, secret, and I had revealed it to itself, giving it meaning and grace and the truth that could come only from the thought and energy of man, and the truth was man, myself, moment after moment, and man, century after

century, and man, and the face of God in man, and the sound of the laughter of man in the vastness of the secret, and the sound of his weeping in the darkness of it, and the truth was myself and I was man.

He learned "to walk through the silence of the earth," and, in fairness to the author, it must be said that in this sketch and in some others his cultivated sentimentality functioned with emotional authenticity and made of his self-centeredness, of a purely human fact, an artistic reality. But even these citations fail to reveal a flawless artist; unnecessary words hunt each other, and their pathos violates creative discipline, and they also suggest a forced note of frankness.

Often his romanticism echoes up-to-date bohemianism; he is lavish in his romantic identification with those who ridicule life's gloom with love. Murger's Rodolphe and Mimi reappear in the world of an American *avant garde* writer; this writer of uncritical impulses is less "modern" than an automobile or an airplane, despite the confusion that he caused on the American stage and on the American literary market place and despite his flirtation with expressionism and surrealism.

### III

Saroyan is a prolific writer. He is passionately in love with publicity, with humanity, and with himself. A zigzag brightness of the spirit illuminates the output of his writings; sometimes it is intoxicating brightness. Yet he writes too much; too much sunshine makes clouds desirable. Too much twinkling of the eye makes one wonder whether one can see. Of the seventy-one stories and sketches in *Inhale and Exhale*, many are nothing but extended aphorisms and parables. He simplifies moods or situa-

tions; but that is precisely what epigrams do. He does not seem to know the difference between slapstick comedy and real mirth; his lack of self-criticism might be interrelated to his lack of composition. His drifting imagination co-operates with the acrobatic gleams of self-consciousness; his spontaneity is limited because of a problematical reasoning intelligence. The burlesque performance of his writing is often pointless because there is no focusing intelligence to support it. He uses the method of hackney originality; after writing a short story, he transforms it into a one-act play and finally into a lengthy play. Other writers did this too; Arthur Schnitzler, for instance, Anatole France, and Luigi Pirandello. As a matter of fact, it does not indicate inferior inventiveness because a writer uses a theme in various genre; in Saroyan's case, however, so much writing is but subtle or shouting bluff. It does not result from the writer's incapacity to do a better job but from the same psychology that one finds in ardent gossipers; even without rumors they cannot stop talking. Saroyan is gossiping about goodness, and this seems the main reason why he monopolizes the publishing and theatrical world with an uncritical gusto.

The prolificness of Saroyan and his writing technique imply an instability, owing to the fact that he is the son of immigrant parents. Saroyan is neither a pessimist nor an optimist. He is the symbol of a conflict conquered by self-centered and projected happiness, but unconquered in the tiring effort of "belonging" externally to the American world. The happiness that he consciously and spontaneously spreads prevents him from being a searcher of truth in a philosophical sense; but the very fact that he refers to his Armenian origin in

a willy-nilly manner, the very fact that his imaginative expressions had to accept an American coloring in order to be recognized as American contributions to literature, signifies the same kind of self-consciousness that one has when one wears a new suit for the first time. Saroyan is not class-conscious, but he is conscious of an America that was a host to his parents, who were Armenian immigrants. He wants to have the ease and freedom of an American host; hence the hospitality of his too numerous publications and plays, and hence the zeal to be unique, to be original, to be interesting even in manner, which is, after all, the technique of substance. He is, indeed, like a host who entertains his guests with all sorts of tricks because he is afraid they might leave his place too soon.

The pity and absurdity that emanate from his sketches, stories, and plays seem to require the kind of verbal pyrotechnics which critics and the public associate with his art. I said that Saroyan is not uprooted but that he has no roots either. He is creating his own roots while he creates his own art. Probably it is due to this immense task that there is scarcely ideological or artistic growth in his work. The arabesque characteristics of Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* or the mosaic richness of the early stories of Maxim Gorki were significant substantial and technical phases in the evolution of these writers. But the spiritual naïveté and craftiness of Saroyan and his experimentalist technique, his perspective as an artist of writing, have not changed very much since *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* appeared, and this was in the year 1934. What was then youthful remained youthful; what was artistically ripe remained artistically ripe; what was irritating remained irri-

tating; and what was sophomoric and meaningless remained so.

#### IV

Because Saroyan is an artist, though a minor one, in his indignation against an ugly world and in his attachment to goodness he does not follow the directive of sentimental righteousness. He is not a crusader; he is essentially an unchained lyricist (not a poet), who cannot dismiss the cruelty of the world with a light gesture and who cannot accept the aberrations of politicians and other poker-faced pillars of society as inevitable debaucheries of human fate. He sees goodness from the inside. It is mobile goodness; its energy is not that of an ostentatious or hysterical reformer but that of a soul recognizing beauty in *Homo sapiens*. Children and adults, dreamers and failures of humanity, raconteurs and timid people, tramps, "wise guys" and practical citizens, sailors, saloon-keepers, and escapists, live in this merry-go-round world of Saroyan. His sensibilities are not complicated; his judgment is an imaginative sequel to a commonplace existence. His purposeful vagueness has occasionally the charm of measured spontaneousness and playfulness.

Saroyan often stands on his head and thus looks at the world; he can be droll and dull, but it is really not difficult to understand him. He may not be able to suggest everything he would like to suggest; this improviser of stories and plays may not be strong in structure-building, but he offers warmth and color that is sometimes trustworthy. In his notes about his plays he says: "The message of each play comes from the world—which the writer regards as the only and therefore the best place known to man. The comedy, tragedy, absurdity and nobility of these plays come from people

whom the author regards as beautiful." One may argue about this omnipotent recognition of beauty in human nature, but one cannot deny the writer's ability to make of his ethics the kind of psychological experience which, precisely because of its meagerness of ideas and because of its temperamental glow, might give the movies an opportunity to supply the audiences with better pictures. Audiences, like women, enjoy flattery; Saroyan's flattery has at least a certain artistic quality.

He shares his subjectivity with everybody; he can talk in terms of the people though he talks about himself. "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze" is the story of a poverty-stricken young writer; what makes him distinct is his relationship to Saroyan, his appealing Armenian rambling in an American metropolitan community. It is rather difficult to pick a significant part from the pensive and wild sentences of this story, but this should suffice:

He rose in an elevator to the seventh floor, moved down a hall, and, opening a door, walked into the office of an employment agency. Already there were two dozen young men in the place; he found a corner where he stood waiting his turn to be interviewed. At length he was granted this great privilege and was questioned by a thin, scatterbrained miss of fifty.

Now tell me, she said; what can you do?

He was embarrassed. I can write, he said pathetically.

You mean your penmanship is good? Is that it? said the elderly maiden.

Well, yes, he replied. But I mean that I can write.

Write what? said the miss, almost with anger.

Prose, he said simply.

There was a pause. At last the lady said: Can you use a typewriter?

Of course, said the young man.

All right, went on the miss, we have your address; we will get in touch with you. There is nothing this morning, nothing at all.



In his collections of stories and sketches, in *Inhale and Exhale*; *Peace, It's Wonderful*; *Love, Here Is My Hat*; *Little Children*; *Three Times Three*; *The Trouble with Tigers*, there is much poor, downright bad material. However, some of his short romantic stories, despite the silly explanatory notes of the writer, reach the readers' hearts. They are presumptuous, they are screwy, they have a kidding quality, they are lively. Even their emptiness seems to be hunting for feeling.

Saroyan has an aptitude for unexpected titles. Women's hats, sometimes, make their heads interesting. It has been said that if Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner* had been called *The Old Sailor*, the fame of the poem might have suffered. Saroyan's inclination for unusual titles is undeniable. His *My Name Is Aram*, a collection of fourteen stories and sketches, is partly in demand because of the intriguing title of the book. The stories, similarly to other stories of Saroyan, deal with boyhood memories, with relatives, but also with friends and strangers. The environment of the tales is the Armenian district in Fresno, California. In these stories Saroyan shows us fools and practical people, distorted and delightful characters. The following "confession" is revealing: "As to whether or not the writer himself is Aram Garoghlanian, the writer cannot very well say. He will, however, say, that he is not, certainly *not*, Aram Garoghlanian." This teasing statement seems organically related to the "practical joker" in Saroyan.

If he would only learn how to revise his work. This applies to his first novel, *The Human Comedy* (this time he failed as an expert in catchy titles), as well as to his plays. Saroyan's pleasure in hav-

ing written *The Human Comedy* is evident on every page. It is the wartime story of a California family by the name of Macauley. The adults and the children of the family are, in a psychological sense, known to the reader from earlier stories. Mrs. Macauley, Homer, who at the age of fourteen is very much in the stream of life, his boss, the manager of the telegraph office, the operator, Grogan, Ulysses, the four-year-old brother of Homer, and the rest of the characters are convincingly human. There is *deus ex machina* clumsiness in the novel; there are defects that defeat the purpose of coherence and psychological inevitableness; it is a sketchy novel, humorous, gentle, though on the border line of sentimentality, in parts definitely trite.

His plays, the one-acts and the longer ones, are the kind of dramas and comedies that one cannot sit through quietly; one either leaves the theater or is grateful for a queer and amusing evening. His *Razzle Dazzle* volume contains sixteen short plays, with an introductory note by the writer. Lope de Vega wrote over a thousand plays, but most of them were rejected by posterity. Saroyan has to watch his prolificness. His best plays are published in two volumes, entitled *Three Plays: First Series* and *Three Plays: Second Series*. The final evaluation of *My Heart's in the Highlands*, of *The Time of Your Life*, or of *The Beautiful People* has not been made. There are critics who consider Saroyan's plays cockeyed or extravagant; others consider them whimsical, lovable, extraordinary. In my opinion there is a great deal of affected honesty and obscureness in these plays; but the good qualities of Saroyan are also observable. Some of the plays seem mere attempts at newness—*épater le bourgeois* in twentieth-century Ameri-



ca. In the Preface to *The Time of Your Life* Saroyan proclaims this credo: "A play is a world, with its own inhabitants and its own laws and its own values." How romantic a definition! It almost suggests the caricature of an aesthetic creed because it has been so often stated.

## V

In summing up the artistic and psychological significance of William Saroyan, it seems logical to ask whether his preoccupation with singing, loving, bustling common sense, and nonsense indicates a real concern with the fundamentals of human nature. He is still a young man; this broadcaster of human sentiments and whims is still principally a promise rather than a realization, though part of his work has some creative merit. Despite the mobility of his spirit, he has a static idiom; despite his strongly personal tone, he suggests universal appeal, for which he has not as yet found his form. Will he find it? I do not say that he should polish his expression, but I would say that he should find his expression. For the time being he has not found it. Is he searching for it, or is he satisfied with the ease with which moods dance on the floor of his imagination?

He must learn how to grow up without betraying his childlike wonderments. He is in the army now; his virginal conceit of the heart might be affected by it, and I mean favorably. Inasmuch as the army means discipline, it is possible that this experience will also generate in him the need of artistic discipline. Of course, it is possible that in his deepest self Saroyan always recognized the need of creative discipline but that he lacked the ability to make use of this awareness. Leibnitz' *Best World of All Existing Worlds* induced Voltaire to write *Candide*;

Saroyan is not Voltaire, neither is he Ella Wheeler Wilcox, but he is an agent of artistic sensibilities which sometimes permit him to reach the object of a more or less reliable creative expression.

*Sic itur ad astra.* Vergil's path to greatness seems unknown to him; yet he is eager to examine imponderables in his own fashion, therefore in harmony with that classical tradition of literature which sacrifices temporariness for eternal verities. In his mind he is an Armenian regionalist, born and reared in California, enjoying the wide horizons of the American scene; throughout his work one senses the potential qualities of a romantic sensibility, reduced, however, to the experience of exaggerated and exaggerating self-love which confuses and interferes when the detachment of creative understanding and conscientiousness is required.

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## Tragic Pattern in Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness"

LEONARD F. DEAN<sup>1</sup>

THE thing I can never understand, complains Aldous Huxley's cynical Miss Penny, is why "you literary men think yourselves so important—particularly if you write tragedies. It's all very queer, very queer indeed." Miss Penny might well be commenting on the published criticisms of Conrad, for the arguments about his importance lead finally to this question: Is his best work truly tragic? A typical affirmative answer is Baker's:

And to him, as to all the great ones, tragedy is not a sad thing, but exhilarating, vitalizing, dynamic. . . . [His chief characters, like] Lear and Cordelia, have reached a spiritual plane above all the evil in the world. The outcome in prosperity or failure is nothing; it is the ripeness of human personality which is the enduring consummation. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Other writers have used the comparison with *Lear* to explain or prove their conviction that a story like "The Heart of Darkness" achieves an effect which is profoundly affirmative rather than despairing and that Conrad therefore belongs at his best in the great tragic tradition. The comparison is suggestive, however, rather than precise. It is important to try to see how its truth is limited.

"The Heart of Darkness" is obviously symbolic. It is another of Marlow's

"inconclusive experiences"; inconclusive, he suggests, in the sense that it is perhaps finally "impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's experience—that which makes its truth, its meaning"; but also inconclusive, we are made to feel, in the more important sense that it embodies a central problem which all men must face and which is therefore never concluded. [The journey is, of course, not merely into the heart of Africa but into the mind of man, which "is capable of everything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future." Essentially the problem is the relation and the disparity between appearance and reality, and hence the nature, the need, and the value of illusion.]

[It is first stated in the commonplace terms of the conquest of savagery by civilization. The philosophic mood of the discussion is established by the opening twilight scene in which the four men wait for the tide on the lower Thames, with the monstrous city on the one hand and the darkness on the other. They reflect that down this waterway have gone explorers to all the dark places of the earth, that even England was once one of those dark places. But admiration for the courage of the Roman and Elizabethan colonizers is quickly qualified

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<sup>2</sup> E. A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel* (London, 1939), X, 42-43.

by admission of their greed. The problem is complicated, Marlow suggests. "The conquest of the earth . . . is not a pretty thing when you look into it"; and yet it is somehow redeemed by an ideal behind it. It is to illuminate this statement that Marlow tells his story.

From the outset he is increasingly critical of the vulgar belief in progress and in the superiority of European civilization. "The jolly pioneers of progress" in the home office talk hypocritically about being emissaries of light to ignorant millions. Trading posts clinging to the dark coast of Africa, a French warship firing into the bush, make him feel that the whole affair is stupid, ineffectual, and arrogant. The feeling is strengthened by his experiences ashore. The whites, driven by a hysterical greed, abuse the blacks and plot against each other. In the midst of all this feverishness and demoralization, a simple clerk who keeps his books methodically and who still dresses with European neatness seems somehow worthy of enormous respect. The effect to this point is one of nearly complete cynicism. Apparently the only redeeming ideal behind the conquest of the earth is a business-like efficiency. A man can find relief only in preoccupation with routine details. "When you have to attend to things of that sort, the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily." Otherwise, human actions are felt to be no better than "monkey tricks." And here Marlow, as if he were carried away by his old cynicism, strikes at his listeners. Their actions, too, he suggests, are merely acrobatic performances on "tight-ropes—for what is it? half-a-crown a tumble—" "Try to be civil, Marlow," one of them growls. "I beg your pardon," he answers. "I forgot

the heartache which makes up the rest of the price. And indeed what does the price matter, if the trick be well done?"

The request to be civil comes to us now charged with added meaning. It is a request not for mere politeness but for protection from reality, for illusion. To be civilized is to play-act, to pretend that there is no heartache beneath the surface, to make believe that routine efficiency is an adequate end in itself. This is one defense against cynicism and despair, but, of course, it is not a radical cure. It is merely to substitute an athletic devil for the flabby one which was everywhere in the Congo. It is to find a really radical cure that Marlow is eager to meet Kurtz. He "was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all." Kurtz, from all reports, was superior to the little men; he was something of a genius; and, above all, he was articulate—an eloquent voice. The suspense engendered by the prolonged trip upriver is dependent upon theme even more than upon action. The meeting with Kurtz will be the climax of the plot; but, more important, we feel that it will be the moment of illumination.

Before we arrive, however, the issue is drawn more sharply, and the conditions of the illumination are clarified. First, there is the sight of savages dancing. "They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild passionate uproar." Any solution to man's dilemma, that is, must be based on this ugly truth.

Let the fool gape and shudder—the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as those on



the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff—with his own inborn strength. Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags—rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief.

Illusion may finally be necessary, but it must be consciously and knowingly adopted after one has understood his savage heritage, his basic imperfection.

That savage heritage, as a matter of fact, may contain good as well as evil. This thought comes to Marlow when he tries to explain the extraordinary restraint of the starving cannibals who constituted the crew. They had no earthly reason to refrain from killing and eating the whites. But they did. Certainly their restraint was more admirable than that of the pilgrims, which was nothing more than the desire to keep up appearances. When the policeman and public opinion are withdrawn, then the quality of one's restraint is revealed: "You must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your capacity for faithfulness." Unless, of course, you are "too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know you are being assaulted by the powers of darkness." The illumination cannot come in these terms. To be a true illumination there must be a full awareness of the issue, of the consequences involved. The absence of this awareness is illustrated by the Russian follower of Kurtz. He is immune and indestructible because of his very innocence and simplicity. For him there is no problem; consequently he has nothing to offer. Marlow "almost envied him the possession of his modest and clear flame," but it could not lighten the darkness for others.

When we at last reach Kurtz, it seems that he, too, has nothing to offer. He has dispensed with illusion, but on terms that we cannot accept. "Pure, uncomplicated savagery" is a positive relief compared to the unnatural horror of his

degradation. And yet Marlow is forced to prefer him to the evil hypocrisy of the pilgrims, who judge that Kurtz's methods are unsound only because the time is not yet ripe for them. "Exterminate all the brutes!" Kurtz had penciled at the end of his eloquent and noble report on the Suppression of Savage Customs; and Marlow perceived that this was the brutally logical conclusion to efficiency uninformed by moral idealism. "It was something to have at least a choice of nightmares"; and the nightmare of Kurtz's end was paradoxically lightened by his final awareness of its horror. It was something to face the savagery within himself to which he had succumbed. The pilgrims lacked even that insight and, indeed, unconsciously preened themselves on their blindness. When Marlow returns home, the people he sees on the streets are like the pilgrims. "Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend."

But, though we prefer Kurtz's final honesty and self-knowledge, we cannot endure to live in a nightmare. This is what Marlow discovers when he faces Kurtz's Intended. He is filled with despair "before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness. . . ." And so he lies about Kurtz's last words. Otherwise "it would have been too dark—too dark altogether. . . ." Thus the true philosopher, Conrad seems to say, is the one who has seen reality but who then, filled with a kind of wise humility, has returned and accepted the illusion which has now become a saving ideal.

An analysis like the one above does



seem to reveal a tragic pattern which is comparable to that in *Lear*. It is evident in the first scene of the play that the King has taken certain conventional moral and political ideals to be absolutely descriptive of reality. For him, what may or should be, is: All children do love their parents; all subordinates do reverence their superiors; and so on. This illusion or misapprehension dooms him to tragic consequences. But if the final tragic effect, as described by Baker and others, is to be achieved, the opening must prepare not only for disillusionment but also for affirmation. The traditional ideals which in distorted form constitute the King's original illusion are not to be denied, but purified and reaffirmed. Cordelia, Edgar, and Kent, who must for a time remain at a distance or in disguise, are, of course, the chief symbols of good, the promise that actuality may become ideal. In addition, Edmund the Bastard helps to provide for the final insight in a negative fashion. Directly after the first scene comes his vigorous denial of social and natural order, of legitimacy and the influence of the stars. His penetration of hypocrisy and rationalizing seems at first to mark him as the opposite of Lear, as a man wholly free from disabling illusions. His ultimate philosophical function, however, is to demonstrate that traditional ideals cannot be completely denied. Since the final insight is to be an affirmation, it cannot come in his cynical terms; but if it is an enlightened, rather than a sentimental, affirmation, it must hear and evaluate his argument. Lear and Gloster do, of course, hear in Act IV, where life is reduced to aimless copulation and men are equated with flies that the gods kill for their sport. This point in the play is comparable to the heart of darkness, to Kurtz's final horror. The chief difference between the story and

the play is to be found in their conclusions, in the quality of the symbolism there employed, and in the limitations imposed by the use of Marlow. When Lear awakens near the end of the play, he is shown to be purged of his initial arrogance. Cordelia addresses him as royal lord and majesty, and we are persuaded that at last through his suffering he has reached a true understanding of "the specialty of rule." The breach between cynicism and naïveté is seen to be healed; the exhilaration of his informed innocence is transmitted to us in traditional imagery as he cries: "We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage"; and he dies asserting in the face of Cordelia's death that what she stands for still lives.

The conclusion of "The Heart of Darkness" produces a far different effect, although the intention is the same. The symbolism is melodramatic. The Intended has not earned the quality which she is meant to represent, and her effect is further weakened by the Hollywood set in which she is placed. When she extends her arms, the pose and the calculated manipulation of light, shadow, and black drapery recall too obviously the earlier mechanical symbol of the savage queen on the banks of the Congo. These lapses may be explained in part by reference to limitations in Conrad's artistic resources. The conclusion of the story, unlike the Congo experiences, was probably invented. Conrad's weakness in invention has often been noticed. It is implied by his preoccupation with the importance of reading symbolic meaning into actual experience. A wider explanation, however, is to be reached through a study of his use of Marlow. This fictitious narrator is usually explained as a device for securing aesthetic distance between the reader and the plot, thus reducing the impact of Conrad's roman-

tic material. In "The Heart of Darkness" Marlow does serve to interest us in meaning rather than in brute action, but he also prevents Conrad and the reader from fully experiencing the final tragic effect. It is Marlow rather than Kurtz who returns to affirm his faith in the Intended. This is unsatisfactory because Marlow has only observed Kurtz's horror. His somewhat parallel sickness is an inadequate substitute for Kurtz's complete disillusionment. In fact, Marlow's moral insight appears to be nearly as penetrating at the beginning of his journey as at the end. It was perhaps inevitable, given his artistic function, that he should be a static character.

Even more suggestive is the quality of Marlow's attitude toward the Intended. It contains a hint of gallantry, or at least of considerateness and pity. Certainly, it is not Lear's exhilarating other-worldliness. Much, of course, had intervened between Shakespeare and Conrad to weaken the Platonic-Christian myth of which the traditional tragic pattern is a particular and secular representation. It had been weakened not only by scientific skepticism but also by the worldly ethics arising from the puritan dilemma.

Puritanism sees illusion in the visible universe; it requires men as long as they are in the flesh, to act as though the illusion were real; it punishes them if they take illusion for reality. . . . The irony of man's predicament is that in his present condition he is not released from natural necessities, and yet he is incapable of satisfying them without adding to the enormity of his sin.<sup>3</sup>

This recalls the predicament of the honest Marlow as he lies to the Intended. The quality of his attitude toward her suggests, furthermore, the exaggerated value put upon small virtues by those who sought to escape from the puritan dilemma. They wished to persuade themselves that it is possible to mollify a stern deity by behaving admirably within the illusion. Conrad exhibits something of the same reliance upon duty, loyalty, decency, and "the steeled heart." This is obviously not the "exhilarating, vitalizing, dynamic" quality of *Lear*. Nevertheless, Conrad, in purpose if not always in execution, is still far from Miss Penny and the Hollow Men. It is not surprising, therefore, that he is prized above his contemporaries by Eliot and other searchers for a new affirmative myth.

<sup>3</sup> Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York, 1939), pp. 42, 157.

## *Directed Discussion Questions Plus Practical Objective Tests*

PAUL BUNYAN ANDERSON<sup>1</sup>

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments.

CAN agreement on a dual procedure in examinations promote peace in the educational community and at the same time strengthen the three R's in the students who study English in college?

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In the warfare between the English teachers and the educators, the objective examinations sponsored by the educators have met the traditional discussion examinations used by the English teachers in prolonged and deadly conflict, with no decision yet in sight and a

stalemate likely. Though the educators have found the arguments for using objective examinations irresistible, English teachers have continued to find them defective educationally, since they sometimes fail to exact either logical analysis or synthesis, dangerously minimize the use of language, and confirm the college student in his original laziness and illiteracy. Though life often confronts him with alternatives ("true-false") or with several possibilities ("multiple choice"), it usually requires him to discover the choices for himself. An objective examination never calls upon a student to be active in organizing and communicating his thinking through writing well. Given an examination suited to the illiterate, or to the barely literate, the student is merely directed to make X his mark in crediting or rejecting statements phrased and assembled by the educator. The utmost refinement of the examiner's technique serves but to spin a web of items, certain to catch much curious and trivial matter, and sure to pass through much that has substance and value in the study of literature. Finding objective examinations unsuited to their most important objectives, reading well, writing well, and responding well to literature and life, the English teachers and their students have resisted all temptation (and compulsion) to make any wide use of the objective examination.

The educators, nevertheless, have reiterated their arguments for employing objective examinations and in practice have relied chiefly on them. They provide a wider sampling in less examination time. They are easy to score. A clerk, or in larger institutions a machine, can score them more quickly and accurately than the best of English teachers. The objective examinations are all but foolproof the educators assert. Free

of subjective bias and variability, they give an impartial measurement of student achievement. Joe College with this miraculous wand can point to his own faults, be motivated to greater effort, and even acquire confidence in the grades his professor gives him.

With such arguments and armament massed on each side, what is the prospect for suspending hostilities and making peace between the educationists and their opponents? Are we ready at long last for an armistice, a mediation,<sup>2</sup> or perhaps a marriage<sup>3</sup> between educator and English teacher for the greater good of the educational community? Is there any chance to make the best of both worlds in a peaceful settlement?

# I

Though the diversity and variety in the American educational scene and the resistance of their opponents in the liberal arts colleges do distress the tidy and busy minds of the educators, they ought not to despair too soon. In *Comprehensive Examinations in the Humanities*, his third report on examination practices, Professor E. S. Jones looks upon the variety of educational procedure in American colleges and universities and finds it good. He believes that "the new type objective questions are gaining headway in the junior college and may ultimately receive wide application on the senior college level," but "for some time to come, senior examining is likely to be directed at small groups with types of background characteristic of particular colleges, making the technical construction of ob-

<sup>2</sup> William I. Painter, "To Effect a Mediation," *Journal of Higher Education*, XIV (October, 1943), 374-78.

<sup>3</sup> L. H. Stimmel, "A Perhaps Too Open Letter," *Journal of Higher Education*, XIV (January, 1943), 25-28.



jective test items undesirable."<sup>4</sup> Outside the high schools and junior colleges, the traditional or discussion type of examination continues to be the most widely used American examination, but as used in the senior colleges the undirected or "essay" type of discussion question has been displaced by what Professor Jones calls the "directed" or "relational" discussion question. This is particularly true in English and the modern languages.<sup>5</sup> It is a matter for investigation whether the educators may properly claim credit for this result, but they can certainly take satisfaction in present practices, provided they can admit that there is a place for the directed discussion examination and that improvement is being made in the use of this kind of examination.

## II

The question remains whether a wider use ought to be made of the objective examination and its advantages shared by teachers and students at the college and university level in the subjects where its use has been most restricted. Professor G. M. Ruch in *The Objective or New-Type Examination* and in *Specimen Objective Examinations* has twice made available the objective examination in English winning first prize in its field and tying for the grand prize in a national competition. It is an objective test for nothing less (and probably nothing more) than "the qualities of a passage in literature." Describing this prize-winning Alameda High School test prepared by Mr. Arthur F. Agard as "a most interesting and original approach to a very difficult type of measurement,"

<sup>4</sup> Edward Safford Jones, "Comprehensive Examinations in the Humanities," (*Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges*, XXIII, No. 2 [May, 1937], 13).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Table I, p. 14.

and placing it in a line of development initiated by Dr. F. M. Carpenter of the University of Iowa, Professor Ruch concluded that "the work of Agard and Carpenter represents one of the significant contributions to the technique of the objective measurement of the teaching of literature in the high school and college."<sup>6</sup>

Since Professor Ruch and his committee of professional judges have singled out this Alameda objective test in literature for a professional award, it deserves examination from the human and practical point of view of the English student and the English teacher. What should an examination in English accomplish? Like a course in English, it should contribute to the student: (1) exercise for strengthening the three R's of English, reading, writing, and responding well, responding well to literature and life; (2) materials for self-diagnosis and analysis, particularly analysis of his own capacities for reception<sup>7</sup> and communication through language; (3) a measurement, a grade, a literary I.Q.; and (4) a will directed toward the objectives of the course and toward maturing his own mind and character. To be sure, this is too much for any course or any examination to accomplish by itself, but any and every examination should make some contribution to these goals. If an examination is to win our devotion, it should establish the probability that it makes a greater contribution to them than any rival claimant.

It would be helpful to have a full

<sup>6</sup> G. M. Ruch, *The Objective or New-Type Examination* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1929), p. 248.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Leo Rockwell, "The Fourth R is an L," *College English*, I (October, 1939), 61-67, who suggests that we add *listening* as a fourth R in English studies.



statement from the judges about the positive merits of the Alameda test, and still more interesting to know what educational objectives the teacher thought the test furthered and how student acceptance was secured. Like other objective tests in English, the Alameda test exercises and strengthens reading and *not* writing. In Part I it promotes response to four qualities of style and technique and one of value—"worth of thought"—and asks that *one* of these five qualities be ascribed to each of twenty identification passages. In Part II a fifth quality of technique—"effective contrast of main ideas"—is added, and the student is required to assign *two* of these six qualities to each of ten passages. In Part III he is confronted with the names of seven errors in "logical and tasteful expression" and required to affix *one* label of ignominy to each of fifteen identification passages. He is invited, finally, in Part IV to place each of twenty passages of poetry in its proper period of English literature—A, B, C, or D—beginning with the eighteenth century and ending with the period of modern and free verse.

Explicit directions for Parts I, II, and III are given the student to proceed by the "Method of Residues," testing every passage for every quality, and eliminating one by one all the qualities not appropriate to the passage. Four periods of English literature are elaborately characterized in the directions for Part IV, perhaps implying that the conscientious student had better keep in mind a total of at least thirty-six characteristics, though nothing is said about applying the "Method of Residues." Perhaps not even a perfectly drilled Alameda or University of Iowa student at this point in the test would have the heart or the formalized mental muscles to ripple

through the thirty-six traits supplied by the tester and apply them to the twenty identification passages. Instead he might have the good sense to try to pigeon-hole each passage by fusing such qualities as were appropriate to it in a single act of perception.

This Alameda-Iowa test probably measures some specialized skills in style and language artificially acquired by a limited group of students. Did they acquire enough that will be useful in adult reading and living to repay them for submitting to this highly formalized pedagogical discipline? For wide use by students with normal human interests and of varied ability is this objective test sufficiently practical in method? Is it successful in furthering educational purposes adequate in scope and value? Securing student acceptance of this test must have taken immense energy and great devotion in the teacher.

### III

Should English teachers take the lead in finding middle ground between the contending views as to proper procedure in examinations? Should they try to develop a sound and practical objective examination in literature and state a working philosophy for examinations in English which may be tried and tested widely in American colleges and universities through the co-operation of educators and English teachers? Part of the examination grade, or score, could be earned through directed discussion questions, and the remainder earned through a different and simpler kind of "objective" examination better suited to the needs of students in English classes. The available examination time should probably not be divided equally, since the time saved by using

the objective technique could be best used for extending the time for the discussion portion of the examination.

About fifteen years of experience with several varieties of this "dual procedure" examination in different kinds of English courses, in four states and in four colleges, administered to students of every level of ability, has led me to conclude that it is worth presenting for the critical consideration of English teachers throughout the United States. An examination of this kind widely and consistently used would provide English students and teachers with new materials for diagnosis, and educators with opportunities for discriminating studies in correlation. For students of highest ability the same ranking should result in both halves of the examination. For the others the variation in ranking probably represents skills varying in kind and in proportion. The average of the grades in the two parts of the examination is probably a just over-all measurement of the achievement in English studies of students in the middle and lower levels of ability. Assuming balanced development and good judgment in both teacher and student, considerable correlation should be expected between the two halves of the examination.

Since the discussion half of the examination requires merely the continuation of the use of directed discussion questions such as Professor Jones found being effectively used in many senior colleges in the United States, that half of the examination requires no further consideration here. But a listing of some of the possible forms of simple and practical objective identification tests, and one specimen test, used this year at

Otterbein College in the sophomore survey course in English literature, are worth submitting to educators and English teachers for their appraisal and advice.

From the beginning of my teaching experience I have used an identification test on each play read in the Shakespeare course, asking the student merely to "Name the character speaking." This type of test may be used for Chaucer or Milton, or a variant such as, "Name the character or person referred to." Another form of objective test is serviceable in an hour examination in nineteenth-century poetry, with the simple directions, "Name the poet and the poem," or in the final examination, "Name the poet" (with passages selected from poems actually read, or with characteristic passages from poems not assigned and probably not read). Abandoning this year the unfortunate old custom of teaching English literature with Shakespeare left out, by using Paul Spencer Wood's *Masters of English Literature* as a text, I was able to include Shakespeare in English literature by reading three plays with my sophomores: *Henry IV*, *Twelfth Night*, and *King Lear*. The eighteen passages comprising the objective part of the examination were mimeographed on a single sheet (two sheets would provide thirty-six passages for any teacher who thinks the sampling provided by eighteen inadequate). The students recorded their identifications in the margin at the left of the sheet with a minimum of effort and time devoted to the mere mechanics. The scoring required only a few seconds for each sheet which looked something like this (if a perfect paper!):

Name the character speaking:

*Maria*

*Sir Andrew*

*Falstaff*

*Malvolio*

*Gloucester*

*Falstaff*

*Clown in "Twelfth Night"*

*Malvolio*

*Edgar*

*King Henry IV*

*Hotspur*

*Fool in "King Lear"*

*Maria*

*Edmund*

*Hotspur*

*Goneril*

*Glendower*

*Hotspur*

*Feste (clown)*

*Lear*

*Sir Andrew*

1. *A:* Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan.  
*B:* O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog!
2. O, thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire-light! Thou hast saved me a thousand marks in links and torches, walking with thee in the night betwixt tavern and tavern. . . .
3. Nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes. Well, Jove, not I, is the doer of this, and he is to be thanked.
4. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;  
I stumbled when I saw.
5. Faith, for their poverty, I know not where they had that; and for their bareness, I am sure they never learn'd that of me.
6. *A:* What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?  
*B:* That the soul of our grandam might happily inhabit a bird.
7. Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice. . . .
8. And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,  
And dress'd myself in such humility  
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts. . . .
9. Heart! you swear like a comfit-maker's wife. 'Not you, in good sooth!' and 'as true as I live!'
10. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after.
11. He does obey every point of the letter that I dropp'd to betray him. He does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies.
12. Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
Both? one? or neither?
13. And tell him so; for I will ease my heart,  
Albeit I make a hazard of my head.
14. That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering. . . .
15. *A:* I can call spirits from the vasty deep.  
*B:* Why, so can I, or so can any man;  
But will they come when you do call for them?
16. Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere.
17. Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low—an excellent thing in woman.
18. Methinks sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man has. But I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit.

"Precisely what does this test measure?" the educator asks severely. Probably no one can say, but it is an economical device for recording a number of useful perceptions and responses rather practically combined in a variety of individual readers of Shakespeare. Perhaps the question should be: What is involved in making a correct identification? How did the student do it? What helped him? Probably many things. Perceptive power (not mere memory), response to situation and story (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 and, perhaps, Nos. 1, 2, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17), understanding of characters and perhaps of people like them in real life (probably all except No. 7), sharp discrimination of ideas and values (Nos. 10, 14, 16, 17, and 18 and, perhaps, Nos. 1 and 4)—all these perceptions play a part in successful identification. In the end the simplest way of putting it is to say that the student who becomes consistently successful with this kind of an examination has developed a faculty better than memory, better even than luck in guessing what passages his teacher will select, namely, the insight and capacity to read and respond to a Shakespearean play as enacted in the theater of his own imagination, and a sure skill in placing everything in its context.

Students subjected to this kind of an examination for the first time do not usually make a satisfactory score. Frequently they seek advice from seniors or juniors who have been in the class in a previous year. I understand that the shrewdest fraternity or sorority counsel runs like this: "You'll mark your books, and try to guess what passages you'll get. Sometimes you will guess what he will do, but you'll find it easier to read and even reread the plays, and try to understand them and get wise to the char-

acters." With this impressive advice coming from outside the classroom, it is possible to get a hearing when the professor expounds a working philosophy for student reading of Shakespeare. But more influential is the diagnosis session to which a few minutes of class time is devoted in the meeting following the test.

There are always some interesting misidentifications. Some are very wild guesses, and some very good misidentifications, and a few may raise questions as to the legitimacy of an item in the test. Those misidentifications which are made by several students are all worth examining. Some of them prove to be common and understandable confusions; others raise problems of finer discrimination. Every examination usually has a few surprises for the teacher. Passages involving two speakers, like Nos. 1, 6, and 15, frequently call forth some wild guesses. Specifying Oswald as the speaker of No. 10, however, is very good, since he invariably put into practice the philosophy which is expressed there by the fool critically and ironically. Oswald would not say it in those words, but he would do it every time. Malvolio for No. 16 probably represents student-recall that Malvolio said something about fools and foolery (of course, he spoke in contempt and depreciation of fools), but reveals that much has escaped the student's attention including Feste's revenge on Malvolio (see No. 6). Possibly the student is merely unaware of the meaning of the passage, unaware that the speaker relishes the comic spirit and feels that, like the sun, it shines everywhere and warms everyone. Identifying No. 14 as Kent is also very bad, since the speaker of the lines (Goneril "valuing" her husband) is describing a good man like Kent, and, refusing to



recognize his goodness, calls it intellectual deficiency. Several students assigned No. 13 (Hotspur's characteristic utterance expressing his essential nature) to Cordelia. They were unanimous, after discussing their mistake, that they had felt an underlying and absolute honesty in Hotspur and Cordelia, but granted that Hotspur was always outspoken and that Cordelia's "fault" was in refusing to speak.

It is easier for teachers to construct and for students to understand and accept an objective examination of this kind. Though less refined and less specialized as an instrument of measurement than the Alameda test, it is perhaps superior to it in its value for diagnosis and in capturing and holding stu-

dent interest. Much more natural and less pedagogic, it exercises faculties, and requires answers, that are of value both in reading and in daily living. Placing things in their proper context is essential in life as well as in literature.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Shakespeare is usually misquoted or quoted without regard to the implications of his words in their context. Do our examinations and our teaching have to bear the responsibility for this bad habit which is all but universal? Pi Kappa Delta, for example, a society devoted to furthering sound and fine standards of public speaking, prints on the cover of every issue of the *Forensic Lear's* words to Cordelia: "Mend your speech a little lest you may mar your fortunes." The editor and his readers surely have no thought of the context supplied by Cordelia's character and her competent tongue, which demolishes the glib and oily art of speaking and purposing not, the art for the lack of which she says she is the richer. "Inarticulate" Cordelia speaks very well. She merits election to Pi Kappa Delta.

## How To Teach Punctuation

RALPH H. SINGLETON<sup>1</sup>

THE present method of teaching punctuation to college freshmen seems to me to be fundamentally wrong. It is wrong because it ignores the reason for punctuation, the principle underlying it. It is wrong because it asks the student to do what no mature writer would think of doing.

The student writes a paper which is obscure because of erratic punctuation. Handbook numbers are inserted in the margin of his paper. He is told that he must insert a comma at this point because he must set off a nonrestrictive clause with a comma, or that he must place a semicolon at this point because a semicolon must precede a conjunctive adverb connecting two independent predications. He goes on making the same errors. He is now told that the diffi-

culty is that he doesn't know grammar, that a knowledge of grammar must precede a knowledge of punctuation. And so he is drilled in the recognition of a clause, the difference between an independent and a subordinate clause, the difference between a restrictive and a nonrestrictive clause, the difference between a conjunction and a conjunctive adverb, a conjunctive adverb and a pure adverb. Always he is returned to the rule. The result is that the student is left with the impression that the art of punctuation consists in placing commas, semicolons, and colons in various parts of a sentence according to a long list of rules which must be committed to memory—rules which are arbitrary in the beginning.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that punctuation is merely one of the

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devices by which a writer can convey his thoughts to others. It is necessary simply because the writer lacks certain advantages of the speaker. The speaker doesn't say, "Do you see what I mean question-mark. I think comma however comma that you will agree with me period." No, the speaker will raise his voice to indicate a question; speak more loudly and more explosively to stress a point. He will pause—briefly, so as not to run words together; at length, so as not to run ideas together. He may point or shrug his shoulders or bring his fist down on the table. Pause, tone, pitch, accent, inflection, stress, gesture—all these help the speaker to convey his thoughts to another, a process which is at best beset with tremendous difficulties. The writer has none of these aids; punctuation is his principal substitute for them. Other substitutes are italics, capitals, sentence paragraphs—devices which ought to be taught along with punctuation, since their purpose and use is the same.

The juxtaposition of words on the printed page does require, upon occasion, the use of punctuation merely as a guide for the eye and in no sense as a cue for the ear. With this type of punctuation, which may be called "eye punctuation," pause, accent, etc., play no part. Eye punctuation is almost entirely conventional, not rhetorical. Indeed, it sometimes runs quite counter to rhetorical sense. For instance, the punctuation of geographical place-names is eye punctuation. Logically, we ought to write "Cleveland Ohio," without a comma, since "Ohio" restricts the meaning of "Cleveland." Yet the eye demands a comma between the name of the city and the state, and so the comma is inserted. There is no rhetorical reason for the comma; there is no pause.

Other examples of eye punctuation

are the apostrophe used to show possession, omission, and plural number; the comma (or colon) used to introduce a quotation;<sup>2</sup> the comma used to set off dates and titles following a name; the colon used after the salutation of a letter or in such instances as 6:45 P.M. or John 3:16; the period used to indicate abbreviations; quotation marks in all uses. When indicating a direct quotation, the writer has an advantage over the speaker, who will often resort to verbal punctuation, such as: "Quote, All this is merely to prevent inflation, unquote."

Eye punctuation, although it is not logical, is fairly easy to teach. This is due, I presume, to the fact that, although it is arbitrary, it is also invariable. The instructor simply tells the student that he must always put a period after an abbreviation, always put quotation marks around a direct quotation.

Moreover, since the written statement is always addressed to the eye, however much it might be intended as a guide for the ear, different marks of punctuation are, by common agreement, used to express different relationships between words and groups of words. Thus the comma, semicolon, dash, and period are all used to mark a pause, but a pause for different reasons. For example, a colon, by common agreement, may be used to mark a pause that says to the reader: What follows is more emphatic than if it were introduced by a comma. To take a simple illustration: Together they discovered a magic element: radium.

In other words, the principle behind rhetorical punctuation (and it is only rhetorical punctuation that is troublesome) is the principle of using certain marks of punctuation to say the same

<sup>2</sup> The punctuation mark here comes between the verb and its direct object, quite in defiance of rhetorical sense.

thing that a pause, a gesture, an accent, an inflection will say for the speaker, all in accord with a common agreement as to the meaning of the various marks of punctuation. It is primarily a guide to the ear through the eye, with certain obvious qualifications, which I have briefly touched upon.

What, then, are punctuation rules? They serve merely to point out the specific application of principle. Certainly it is good pedagogy to insist upon a thorough grasp of principle rather than upon a blind following of a rule. If a student asks *why* a sentence should not end with an expression such as "I think," the instructor does not tell him, "Because rule 158 in your handbook says that it shouldn't." No, he explains that ending with such a weak expression detracts from the emphasis of the statement. The rule, I repeat, is only the specific application of the principle.

For some reason this common-sense method of starting with principle has been ignored in the teaching of punctuation. One handbook states dogmatically: "The student who hopes to make punctuation an artistic resource must *first* learn the rules."<sup>3</sup> (The italics are mine.) Another handbook confuses principle with rule and states: "Although professional writers sometimes develop practices in punctuation which differ somewhat from the standard, the beginner will do well to master the well-established principles of punctuation before he begins to indulge in exceptions."<sup>4</sup> This statement comes at the end of a paragraph introducing the student to the punctuation rules—a paragraph which contains not one word about any

principle. A third handbook presents practically nothing in the way of principle to guide the student through a veritable maze of rules—rules which are subdivided, modified, and qualified by numerous notes.<sup>5</sup> All handbooks and rhetorics seem to agree upon the idea that a writer punctuates by the application of rules that are backed up by a knowledge of grammar. I contend that they do nothing of the sort. I have questioned scores of writers on this point. Most of them laugh at me when I mention restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers or grammatical analysis. All of them know the information that the various marks of punctuation give to the reader.

What is the common agreement among English-speaking people about the various marks of punctuation? Fundamentally, I claim, the following marks of punctuation say the following to the reader:

A period: Come to a full stop. You have reached the end of a statement which is complete at this point.

A question mark: The foregoing is emphatic because I so intend it.

A comma: Pause briefly at this point; what follows should not be read as a continuous stream of thought with what has gone before. (In conventional punctuation the comma is for the eye alone. Usually it does not mark a pause.)

A semicolon: Pause somewhat more at length than you would for a comma; the connection in thought is somewhat more remote. Moreover, what follows is co-ordinate with what has gone before.

A colon: What follows is in some measure an explanation of what has gone before, an explanation which is somewhat formal.

A dash: The thought is broken at this point for some reason. A second dash means that the interrupted thought is picked up again at this point. The atmosphere of the dash is informal.

Parentheses: What is inclosed is material definitely aside from the main line of thought. It is relevant or it would not be included, but

<sup>5</sup> Woolley and Scott, *College Handbook of Composition* (Boston, 1944).

<sup>3</sup> Kierzek, *Macmillan Handbook of English* (New York, 1939), p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Foerster-Steadman, *Writing and Thinking* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 161.



it may be skipped without destroying the sense of the statement.

An apostrophe: This is normally the sign of possession or contraction; the context will make clear which.

Brackets: What is inclosed is an aside comment by the editor, not the author. It is inserted for the sake of a fuller explanation.

Quotation marks: What is inclosed is in the words of another, not mine. I take no credit or responsibility for it.

A hyphen: The words so joined have practically the force of a single word.

An ellipsis: Something has been omitted at this point.

A caret: Insert in the sentence at this point the word or words written directly above.

How, then, should punctuation be taught? Start with the principle. Explain that a punctuation mark is comparable to a word; that it actually says something to the reader. Explain that mature writers use punctuation marks advisedly to convey information according to a common agreement among English-speaking people. Explain that this information is necessitated by the handicap of the writer, who is without other means of indicating pause, stress, inflection, and the like. Explain that at times a punctuation mark says to the reader, "This idea is important!" At times it says, "Pause here; do not run these two ideas together." At times it says, "Consider what follows to be an elaboration of what has gone before, an elaboration such as the following: a list, a series, an explanation of some sort, an illustration." Explain that without punctuation marks a writer would be badly restricted in making clear his thoughts. Explain that, if the writer uses the wrong mark of punctuation or fails to use punctuation when he should, he is likely to say what he had no intention of saying—just as though he had used the wrong word. Explain just what punctuation marks he has at his disposal

to bring out his meaning and just what the common agreement is in respect to each. Then, and *only then*, talk to him about punctuation rules. Make clear that the rules are merely the specific application of a principle, that the rules will help him to remember that here he is faced with a situation in which he needs to convey the information that this particular mark of punctuation can best convey. Insist always that behind the rule lies the principle. If the instructor will follow the procedure outlined above, he will soon observe that the student will begin to use punctuation marks intelligently and—what is very important—will have a quite different attitude toward them.

Many teachers of composition throw up their hands in horror at talking about pause and accent in the teaching of punctuation and refuse to bring it to their aid. They say: "I can teach a rule, supported by grammatical analysis. With the rule I have definite authority. But if I start talking about inserting a comma to indicate a pause, then I'm lost. The student comes back with the assertion, 'I want the reader to pause here.'"

My answer is that the authority of principle and common practice is better than the authority of arbitrary rule. Moreover, I insist that no one ever really learned how to punctuate through the memorization and application of rules. It won't work. The instructor who will talk about pause and accent will soon have little trouble with the worst offenders among the punctuation errors: nonrestrictive modifiers, nonrestrictive appositives (which are really nonrestrictive modifiers), and consecutive co-ordinate adjectives preceding the noun. Take the problem of restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses. Without exception there is no pause between the restrictive clause and



the word it modifies.<sup>6</sup> Also without exception, the accent of speech falls upon some word *inside* the clause rather than upon the word it modifies.<sup>7</sup> A student will grasp this almost at once. What's more, the real reason for the lack of punctuation lies not in any grammatical recognition of a restrictive clause but in the intention of the writer that the words be read without pause at this point in order to bring out the idea. In the same fashion a student will readily see that he wouldn't say, "He is a hard-hearted pause old codger," but would

<sup>6</sup> Without exception, that is, when the restrictive clause follows directly after the word that it modifies. In the sentence "This is the book, which nobody reads any more, that I had in mind," there are, of course, pauses necessitated by the nonrestrictive clause "which nobody reads any more." As a result, there is no way, either in speech by accent and pause, or in writing by punctuation, to make clear that the clause "that I had in mind" is restrictive.

<sup>7</sup> For example: (1) (Restrictive adjective clause): Students who understand the *principle* behind punctuation will punctuate intelligently. (2) (Restrictive adverbial clause): I read the novel because it was an *assignment*.

Note that the "because" clause in this last sentence might be nonrestrictive in a certain context. If it is, the accent shifts, and there is a pause between the clause and the rest of the sentence. For example:

"Has anyone read the novel?"

"I read the novel, because it was an assignment."

say, "This is a bright pause warm day." And so there is no need to worry him about recognizing whether the adjectives are co-ordinate or to have him resort to some such mechanical device as trying to insert "and" between the modifying words. Also, pause and accent determine immediately when an appositive is to be set off as nonrestrictive. If the stress falls upon the appositive, the appositive is not to be set off. For example: My brother *John* is in Italy; my brother *Bill* is in the South Pacific. On the contrary: My *sister*, Mary, has joined the Waves. When the stress falls upon the word which is not the appositive and when there is also a pause between the word and the appositive, then set off the appositive by a comma.

The instructor may still throw up his hands with the exclamation, "But I don't want my students to insert a comma because they think that they want a pause at this point." My answer is that I much prefer to have a student insert a comma merely because he wants to indicate a pause or an accent than to have him follow an arbitrary rule that he doesn't understand. He is much closer to the reason for pointing in the first place.

## Round Table

### FALSE DISILLUSIONMENT

I have just finished reading Professor Carl Strauch's interesting article in *College English* for May (pp. 423-28). Most of us will admit that the modern materialistic artist faces a serious problem in attempting to reconcile his art, which dignifies man, with his philosophy, that degrades him. Few of us, however, can agree with all the statements contained in Professor Strauch's analysis and final solution.

For example, Professor Strauch writes: "... in 1690 John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* attacked the notion of innate ideas. If Locke was to be believed, man did not, evidently, come into this life perfectly and beautifully equipped with ideas of God, immortality, and the like. .... Again had supernaturalism been attacked."

There are two implications here: first, that John Locke was the first to attack the notion of innate ideas, second, that an attack on innate ideas is an attack on supernaturalism. This is hardly the case. Aristotle demolished the notion of innate ideas about two thousand years before John Locke. In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas again reduced the Platonic theory to rubble. The proposition that "nothing is in the intellect that has not somehow been perceived by the senses," was axiomatic in medieval philosophy. And, needless to say, both Aristotle and St. Thomas were very "supernaturalistic." Both of them had a purely rational approach to the existence of God. One of their arguments, for example, was from the existence of order in the universe—an argument which Voltaire, for all his skepticism, readily accepted.

Again, Professor Strauch writes: "Darwin pushed the degradation farther. Man was no longer to be thought of as a special

creation to crown God's labors; man was, rather, an animal, the natural product of a natural world."

It is hardly accurate to say that Darwin taught that man was "the natural product of a natural world," for Darwin was very much of a "supernaturalist." In his *The Descent of Man* Darwin writes: "The birth both of the species and of the individual are equally parts of that grand sequence of events which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance." Again, in *The Origin of Species*, Darwin says: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one. ...." And in his *Life and Letters* we find Darwin writing: "In my own extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of God."

Evolution, then, is not necessarily an attack on "supernaturalism." As a matter of fact, evolution is an old story. Augustine of Hippo held that all things at first existed only as *semina rerum* ("the seeds of what was to be"), that there was at first in things only a potency of what, under the action and reaction of strong or slow forces, they should finally become. He maintained, however, as do all who hold an essential distinction between mind and matter, that men's souls are not merely highly organized matter but spiritual entities created by God. Evolutionary theories, similar to that of Augustine, are commonly accepted as not improbable hypotheses by many Christian theologians.

Many of us, I am sure, were puzzled by Professor Strauch's declaration: "If, step by step, man has yielded up the erroneous though sublime view of the Middle Ages, he has amply compensated himself for that loss by developing an exhilarating self-esteem and a robust self-reliance." It is hard to understand how a modern materialist who

has abandoned the "medieval concept" of man's being made in the image and likeness of God for the materialistic concept of man's being made in the image and likeness of an ape has developed "an exhilarating self-esteem." Difficult, too, is it to understand how a modern man who has abandoned the "medieval notion" of free will for the materialistic notion of mechanistic determinism has thereby developed a "robust self-reliance."

Professor Strauch suggests by way of final solution that "we must have that warm humanity which has been increasingly absent as this century has progressed. . . . Franz Werfel suggests the thing. . . ." Now what Franz Werfel suggests is not warm humanity but, if you will, glowing superhumanity. Franz Werfel, by his own confession, is very much of a "supernaturalist." How else could he have sung the song of Bernadette? For if God does not exist, if Bernadette's visions were illusions, *The Song of Bernadette* is an idyll of an epileptic or the epic of an idiot—not, as it actually is, the song of a saint.

Although one cannot accept several parts of Professor Strauch's analysis or his final solution, his general thesis is undoubtedly true: "supernaturalism" (that is, the existence of God) has been attacked, and this attack has seriously harmed our literature. Too many modern writers of undoubted talent, instead of portraying man as little less than an angel, are painting him as little more than an ape.

Indeed, the task that lies before the modern artist is not an easy one. He must recover his belief in God (and consequently his belief in man) by hard thinking. The proofs for the existence of God have lost their popularity but not their validity. They cannot, however, be comprehended in a day. They have to be thought on—long and hard. It is only after such a mental *ascesis* that the full splendor of God will burst upon the artist—and only then the full dignity of man. In that day can the modern artist

write again with "that warm humanity which has been increasingly absent as this century has progressed."

R. W. MULLIGAN, S.J.

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT

### UTOPIAN LECTURES

I was very much interested in the article which appeared in a recent number of *College English* entitled "The Freshman English Situation at Utopia College." Here at Denison we have gone one step further. For the first time in twenty years we have been able to present a lecture course for all the students registered in freshman English. These speeches have been so stimulating that perhaps other English departments might like to try a similar program.

When the plan was brought to the attention of Dr. Brown, the president, he immediately replied: "These lectures sound alluring. I wouldn't mind lecturing before such a group myself on the subject: 'The Fun of Writing.'"

During the year, on the average of once a month, our two hundred freshmen met in the faculty assembly room for a discussion of the following subjects:

- The World of Shakespeare
- The Fun of Writing
- Backgrounds in English Literature (a travelogue with pictures)
- Ballads and Folklore
- Skills in Reading
- The Novel: Great or Popular
- The Enjoyment of the Drama
- The Short Story

The students enjoyed these lectures, for they served as a relief from the daily routine. They afforded also the opportunity of hearing the various members of our staff, all of whom have special literary interests. The most important result, however, was an increased interest in reading and in writing.

ERI J. SHUMAKER

DENISON UNIVERSITY

## Summary and Report

### About Literature

"EDUCATION FOR THE EMOTIONS" is the theme of the leading article in the *Saturday Review* of August 19, by George F. Reynolds. All the arts may educate the emotions, but Reynolds confines himself to literature as a means to that end. Escape from the troublesome present is literature's least service. It may furnish an expression or outlet for our feelings; it may prepare us in advance for trying experiences; it may make lives richer and fuller. Here Professor Reynolds turns aside to insist that men should be regarded as ends in themselves rather than means to a good society.

The education of emotions is the discouragement of such undesirable ones as "envy, hatred, and malice and all uncharitableness"; but quite as much the encouragement of devotion to some cause larger than one's self. In other words, the aim should be greater discrimination in what we respond to. Since emotions are of prime importance, we should choose and cultivate the desirable attitudes, and the arts, especially if experienced under skilful guidance, are very important means of cultivation.

"THE POET OF THE PRESENT CRISIS" is Wordsworth, according to N. S. Tillett, writing in the summer *Sewanee Review*. The individual import of his poetry for this generation: His troubled world was a striking miniature of ours, our lack of illusions of glory matches his philosophic yet realistic comments on war, and the "conflict of sensations without name" which he experienced as a youth is a common experience today. His nationalism expresses the reason England took up Germany's challenge in 1939, but he criticized his country when she was wrong. Individual liberty was para-

mount to him. His general picture of Europe, found in the sonnets, shows the familiar tyrant, slaves, loss of liberty, refugees, threat of invasion, and bulwark of England. Our most complete and admirable sketch of the military ideal of a peace-loving people is in "The Character of the Happy Warrior," a summary including the Anglo-Saxon great-minded citizen and patriot. Wordsworth, whose brother was a sea captain, lived at the time of Nelson and Napoleon. He had been in the midst of the French Revolution, and under the guidance of one of its noblest soldiers he was stirred from apathy to ecstasy. He expressed his experiences in France in the "Prelude," but when he saw the excesses of the Revolutionary leaders, he experienced the same bewildering vacillation as youth today caught in a war on the heels of the war to end war. He found hope in association with the presences of Nature. Probably this generation will not find escape through Nature, but it may through his poetry.

Influenced by the French Revolution and by his boyhood impression of the essential dignity of the lowly and the basic spiritual dignity of the common man as he found them in the rustic mountaineers, he proclaimed the dignity of the common man. His ideal persons, not too good "for human nature's daily food," are excellent antidotes for twentieth-century patronage of the lowly.

THEODORE SPENCER'S FURNESS Lecture at Wellesley College for 1944, "The Isolation of the Shakespearean Hero," is in the same issue of the *Sewanee Review*. Though sharply aware that isolation is not Shakespeare's universal theme, Spencer



traces this thread of consciousness in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.

IN "THE REVIVAL OF E. M. FORSTER," *Yale Review*, summer, E. K. Brown discusses the spurt of interest in Forster after the influence of Joyce and Mrs. Woolf upon him. In 1943 *A Room with a View*, *The Longest Journey*, *Where Angels Fear To Tread*, and *Howard's End* were reprinted, *A Passage to India* continued in the "Modern Library," and Professor Lionel Trilling wrote a penetrating and sympathetic analysis.

Conscious of the danger the novel of ideas offers to the vitality of characters, Forster attempts believable, breathing beings. To Brown, *Howard's End* is a redoing of *The Longest Journey* with a deeper redemptive character, and *A Passage to India*, with his deepest redemptive character, is a redoing of *A Room with a View*; in both, the backgrounds are broadened. Found from his earliest fiction is the Panic being, not quite a redemptive character, who Forster says is wiser and surer than his conventionalists and intellectuals—but even in this natural man the idea obtrudes. His ability to set real humans in the novel of ideas is illustrated by Mrs. Wilcox in *Howard's End* and by Mrs. Moore in *A Passage to India*—characters who combine the redemptive, Panic, and something more, and are both effective symbols and genuinely human. Atmosphere is convincing; the men conventionalist foils are more credible than the women.

Short stories in *The Celestial Omnibus* illustrate a favorite image of Forster's—that there are two levels of existence and that we cannot focus on both at once. No theme greater than Forster's opposition between the two levels of being is possible, but his failure to find adequate vesture for the theme is his weakness. Important crises in his novels are not true to life. He handles death with a light, unfeeling hand. Al-

though his fiction often falls into unrealism, his achievements in fiction are notable.

The silence after *A Passage to India*, broken by essays, pageants, and a suggestive biography, is, Brown thinks, due to Forster's realization that his ideas were difficult to incarnate and inappropriate to the novel. Ideas being more important to him than character, plot, and settings, he gave up the novel.

"AN EXAMINATION OF MODERN Critics" continues in the summer issue of the *Rocky Mountain Review*, with a paper on T. S. Eliot by Harry M. Campbell and one on R. P. Blackmur by Ray B. West, Jr.

Campbell first corrects "misconceptions" of Eliot's ideas by Yvor Winters and John Crowe Ransom. He praises Eliot's adoption of Arnold's touchstone method and his advance upon it by "doing the testing for us." Eliot logically moves from "analysis and comparison of individual passages" into "profound generalizations" on aspects of the ages in which the poets lived. Eliot's conversion to Catholicism was a not unnatural development from his "devotion to the great tradition."

Eliot rightly calls Arnold an undergraduate in philosophy and theology and a philistine in religion and rightly denies Arnold's dictum that Pope, Dryden, *et al.* are not poetry. Yet Eliot's analysis of them agrees fundamentally with Arnold's feeling that their poetry is composed in their wits rather than in their souls.

Eliot's explanation of the unreality of modern poetry and prose fiction as the result of authors' "attempting to exploit and aggrandize their own personalities without the guidance of suprapersonal standards" is sound, so far as Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Pound, and Yeats are concerned, but is misapplied to Hardy and makes the Wessex novels inferior to the artificial Poe-like *A Group of Noble Dames*.

Campbell concludes by hoping that Eliot may soon produce his own full *Apolo-gia pro vita sua*.

West finds Blackmur in essential agreement with Eliot, except for Eliot's "religiosity." Blackmur, however, avoids general pronouncements and devotes himself to what he thinks the critic's business—"illumination of the facts" (of, not about, the literature) and "elucidation of the object."

"THE SOCIAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE," by Ernest H. Templin, is Volume XXVIII, No. 1, pages 1-24, of the "University of California Publications in Modern Philology." In this rather complex essay Templin evidently writes from what he thinks is the liberal, middle-of-the-road point of view, between the Rightist and the Marxist. His last paragraph reads in part: "Certainly, so far as literature is concerned, the aesthetic approach has produced much vapid iridescence, and the social approach needs some schooling in the quest of beauty. Perhaps in the future there will emerge a new scale of literary values, based on the integration of aesthetic and social factors."

BRYLLION FAGIN SUMS UP THE IMPRESSION which long consideration of Sherwood Anderson's work and years of personal acquaintance had made upon him. Anderson was the earnest, somewhat naïve, baffled young man of *Winesburg, Ohio*. He perceived people and social phenomena clearly but never was able to answer his own perpetual "Why?" He believed in sentiment, felt that Americans—even Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway—are ro-

mantic, and desired to work in the amateur spirit.

IN THE SAME *QUARTERLY* ARCHIBALD Rutledge tells "What Education Needs"—great teachers, who must be great souls quite as much as vigorous minds and good scholars.

"BOOK PUBLISHING IN RUSSIA" IN the *Atlantic* for September is encouraging even more through its picture of Russian book demand than through its praise of the vigorous activity and broad selection by the numerous (government-controlled) publishing agencies. Of American authors, Jack London is most popular, outselling the next two—Mark Twain and Upton Sinclair—together. Dreiser, Steinbeck, and Hemingway continue to appear even during the war.

"THE CORELLI WONDER," BY George Bullock in the April issue of *Life and Letters Today* (the continuation of the *London Mercury* and the *Bookman*) considers the causes which made this author of inartistic and shoddy romances the literary idol of the common people before and after 1900. A passionate personality, a belief in herself, avoidance of all sex stuff, and satisfaction for the wishful thinking of millions basically like herself were the main ingredients. The high moral tone was part of this imaginative satisfaction of her own and other people's wishes.

## About Education

SIX BASIC RECOMMENDATIONS for future college programs in the humanities—languages, literature, philosophy, fine arts, and religion—were adopted by a South-wide Conference on the Humanities which met at Vanderbilt University the week of July 24.

The conference, financed by a special grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, brought together nearly fifty southern edu-

cators from more than a score of colleges and universities. Delegates studied problems of teaching the humanities and of broadening the program so as to reach a wider public.

Basic recommendations of the conference were:

1. The aim of the humanities is to develop in the individual student intellectual penetration, a critical mind, and discriminating

taste. Unless the student has these qualities, other phases of education may prove useless.

2. The burden of responsibility for making the humanities program effective is upon the individual teacher. All subjects, well taught, may have humanistic values.

3. Courses in the humanities should be given early in the college program in order to provide a broad basis for future specialization or professional study.

4. The humanities program should be broad enough to include literatures other than those in the English language, other languages than those traditionally taught—Greek, Latin, German, and French—and the fine arts, including music and art.

5. The humanities should be spread throughout all phases and levels of education, beginning in the secondary schools and, in the colleges, working in co-operation with programs in social and natural sciences.

6. Teachers of the humanities should welcome new teaching methods. Specifically, the survey course and the laboratory method of teaching languages are indorsed, including the plan for exchange professorships and scholarships with foreign countries to aid in instruction of the language and in better understanding between nations and races.

In addition to adoption of this "charter for studies in the humanities," the conference set up a permanent organization to carry out its program. An executive committee was authorized, its personnel to be appointed by the present conference committee at Vanderbilt.

**GRADUATE STUDY WAS DISCUSSED** by R. M. Gay in an address, August 17, at the twenty-fifth anniversary convocation of the Bread Loaf School of English. Basing his remarks on criticisms made by graduate students in various colleges, Dr. Gay advanced a new and unusual "seven-point working-model" for graduate studies:

1. That the Ph.D. degree be granted to any person who, in the opinion of an ex-

amining board, deserves it because he is a sufficiently well-educated person.

2. That the board consist of examiners who are well educated themselves, in the sense of being men and women of broad interests and philosophic minds.

3. That no candidate be permitted to submit a thesis until he has been a Ph.D. for at least ten years and that, when submitted, it shall be judged by general standards of style and content.

4. That the writing of a thesis shall be optional with the candidate; but, if it is finally accepted, he shall receive a special honor, such as *cum laude*.

5. That the curriculum followed by the student shall be one selected by himself, under advice, and may include courses in any department whatever, the only requirement being that it shall conform to some rational pattern of interest or utility.

6. That the fact that the student is by profession a teacher shall be taken into account in the planning of curricula and that he shall be required to pass one course in the history of education and one in the teaching of his subject.

7. That, in general, the higher studies in the humane subjects shall be conceived and administered with regard to their human, vital, and philosophical values rather than with regard to original discovery, productivity, or specialization, specialization and research being encouraged only in those who are by temperament and interest likely to succeed in them.

**"WARTIME ENGLISH TEACHING"** is a descriptive bibliography prepared by Raymona Hull, who is Grace Dodge Fellow at Teachers College, Columbia University. N.C.T.E. mimeographs and sells it for fifteen cents. Most of the items concern secondary and elementary schools, but there is a sprinkling of college material. Though some of this material is of fading importance, much of it will be vital "for the duration"—at least.

## Books

### TRAGEDY THEN AND NOW<sup>1</sup>

In *Climates of Tragedy* Professor O'Connor goes all out for the theory of relationship between milieu and art. The emphasis throughout the book is on the way in which the spiritual temper of an age determines the character of its poetry. Beginning with the assumption that recent eras have produced no genuine tragedy, O'Connor proposes to account for this phenomenon in terms of the dissimilarities in our communal mind and that of Elizabethan England and of Periclean Greece. And he proceeds to show that the modern world has lacked a capacity for tragedy because it has substituted for the Elizabethan and Periclean ideals and views of life attitudes and ways of thinking that are inimical to tragic poetry.

A first condition to tragedy, O'Connor finds, is a people who are arduous in the pursuit of life but who are keenly aware of the evil of death as "man's chief problem." Both the Athenians and the Elizabethans were full of a zest for living, but neither ever forgot the irremediable end of all human existence. When the Greeks accepted from Plato and the Stoics the idea that neither life nor death is a certain good or evil, the tragic muse departed. Later, however, the fifteenth century "became frenzied about death," and a rebirth of "true tragedy was only a century away." The Elizabethans feared death, but, like the Periclean Greeks, they made no sentimental or religious compromises with it or with the suffering that went with it. They faced death defiantly, courageously, but with dignity. Such an attitude is favorable to tragedy. The tragedian sees the irony of life, is a keen critic of the "world he sees and feels about him; but his

tragic vision must come to the fore and elevate and ennoble his reaction." So that in great tragedy we find strife, suffering, and death wedded to a spirit of beauty and of the unconquerable greatness of the human spirit. To produce tragedy a people must be able to accept a noble succumbing to death as a fitting—and a beautiful and fascinating—spectacle, an inevitable release from the suffering which is "the common denominator of the tragic experience."

Because subsequent eras have sought to compromise with evil by glorifying man as better than he is, as did the Restoration; or by overemphasizing the goodness and rationality of a universal pattern of which man is a part, as did the eighteenth century; or because they have accepted a view of life which denies the dignity and nobility of the individual, after the manner of our contemporary naturalists, there has been no great tragedy since Shakespeare. Mr. O'Connor is particularly concerned with the effects of modern naturalism on tragedy. Hauptmann's idea of the world as "brainless, banal, and indecent beyond words" has in large part been the theme of contemporary literature. "Naturalism has threatened and threatens to destroy the self-sufficient individualism glorified by Sophocles and Shakespeare." The temper of our own time is therefore hostile to tragedy. Even those writers like Maxwell Anderson and Robert Sherwood, and latterly Hemingway, who have refused to accept "pathological defeatism" and have been anxious to preach a new faith have missed the mark; for the sting of tragedy lies not in the final realization or the sacrifice of a self-dedicated hero but in "the fact that the hero is one inherently capable of choosing right, and yet . . . chooses wrong."

This book will repay careful reading. In pursuing his main problem of why the mod-

<sup>1</sup> William Van O'Connor, *Climates of Tragedy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943. Pp. vii+115. \$1.75.



ern world has produced no authentic tragedy Mr. O'Connor raises most of the essential questions about the genre and makes a courageous attempt to answer them. It is true that his solutions may not be the final ones. There is always the chance that rigid definitions and prescriptions may not furnish the clue, always the possibility that the old bottles are not just the thing for the new wine. Who knows what trial and error may bring about? The author's treatment of individual authors raises other queries. For example, Milton (in his *Samson*) and T. S. Eliot (in his *Murder in the Cathedral*) are thrown out of the list of great tragedians because of the supervention in their works of the divine over the individual will; if so, what happens to Aeschylus? One may also ask as he reads this book: What has become of Racine? But even granting the justice of such qualifications, the fact remains that O'Connor has effectively presented some positive and stimulating literary ideas. And it is of no small significance that there should come just now from this young scholar—at present serving in the Armed Forces—so definite a challenge to the prevailing cynical, naturalistic mode.

C. D. THORPE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### WEBSTER'S BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY<sup>1</sup>

Professor Jelliffe has rightly pointed out in the April number of *College English* that the new *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* has many admirable qualities. For the benefit of those who may wish to rely upon it for scholarly accuracy, however, attention should be called to certain regrettable features.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Charles W. Roberts, editor of the *Illinois English Bulletin*, has kindly permitted me to use here some of the material included in my review of *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* in the April, 1944, issue of the *Bulletin*. I am also indebted to Professors Harris F. Fletcher, William A. Oldfather, and Roland M. Smith, of the University of Illinois, for information about men in their respective fields.

In the task of compiling biographies of forty thousand persons, errors are bound to creep in. It is suggested that in the preparation of future editions the editors abandon reference to some of the early "authorities" long outmoded by more modern and more accurate scholarship and free themselves from excessive traditionalism in the acceptance of "facts" long deemed questionable.

The editorial staff contains no well-known classical scholar, nor does the list of consultants; hence one is not surprised to find that, though Napoleon is given an entire page, Plato gets only one-fourth of a column, Aristotle one-fourth to one-third of a column, Homer one-sixth, Jesus Christ three-fourths, and Vergil one-eighth (Count Galeazzo Ciano gets nearly twice this amount). Classical scholars have known for more than forty years that Chariton belongs to the second century A.D. at the latest, not the fourth. The "legend" about Zaleucus is so utterly incredible that it should never have been mentioned. In the sketch of Menander, the comic poet, no reference is made to the fact that large portions of six of his plays have been discovered among papyri since 1900. Horace, moreover, did not command a legion in the republican army at Philippi; and there is no truth to the story that Plato "traveled in Egypt" after the death of Socrates; the academy which he founded was endowed from the start, not endowed later; and Socrates does not appear in every one of Plato's dialogues, as is stated, nor does he always play a leading role in those in which he does appear (see *Timaeus*). Furthermore, the most important work of Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, is not even mentioned.

Coming down to a later period, one might suggest that the material on well-known English men of letters would be improved by a more careful reliance on recent scholarly research. It is no longer accepted that Richard Rolle, "the Hermit of Hampole," wrote *The Pricke of Conscience*. Nor is there any valid reason for thinking that Chaucer actually met either Boccaccio or Petrarch; nothing in the records can be found to sub-

stantiate the statement that he "suffered a period of misfortune" and "fell again into poverty." The statement that Spenser "lost his youngest child and perhaps additional books of *Faerie Queene*, barely saved wife and other children; died on mission to London with dispatches" is no longer credited.

The information about Milton, particularly, appears to be based on the traditional scholarship of early investigators rather than on the more accurate findings of contemporary research. The statement about his father's being disinherited is gossip, not fact; his first poem is unknown, but certainly not "On the Death of a Fair Infant"; he wrote "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" at Cambridge, not at Horton; "Pro populo Anglicano defensio" was written in 1651, not 1650; and it is doubtful that *Paradise Regained* was "written at the suggestion of Thomas Elwood." Moreover, Milton did not turn to works upon grammar and logic

in his old age but did publish several prose pieces which he had written years before. His most important English prose work of any length—the *History of Britain*, published in 1670, though two-thirds of it was finished by 1649—is not even mentioned. In addition, the official death record states that the cause of his death was "consumption" (that is, we don't know), not gout. Likewise, the dates of David Masson's *Life of Milton* should have been 1859-96, with an explanation, not 1859-80.

On the whole, however, although *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* cannot be relied on too closely for scholarly accuracy and although some of its selections are poorly proportioned, it is useful as a casual reference work for the average reader.

LAWRENCE H. HOUTCHENS

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## In Brief Review

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

### FOR THE GENERAL READER

*Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace.* By THOMAS A. BAILEY. Macmillan. \$3.00.

The author is evidently a Democrat and a Wilson admirer, but thoroughly informed and reasonably objective. He is able to see Wilson's mistakes, as well as those of Clemenceau, Henry Cabot Lodge, and others. Admitting that hindsight is relatively easy and that probably he would have made many of the mistakes that he criticizes, Bailey still goes on to insist that it is worth while for us to study those blunders in order to avoid repetition. The majority of the book is, of course, devoted to the peace conference and relatively little to the fight in the United States Senate for the ratification of the Versailles Treaty.

*The Literary Fallacy.* By BERNARD DE VOTO. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

A rather savage attack on Van Wyck Brooks and the American writers of the 1920's, whom De Voto accuses of putting literature above life and of failing to represent American life as it was. See Granville Hicks's article in this issue of *College English*.

*The Leaning Tower.* By KATHERINE ANNE PORTER. Harcourt. \$2.50.

Nine short stories, with backgrounds in the Deep South, New York, and Berlin. In the title-story a young American artist goes to Germany in 1931 because his boyhood playmate has drawn glamorous pictures of his visits to Berlin. His boarding-house experiences—the gay places other young men take him to play and the *absence* of all he expected to find depress him. Written with the distinction we expect of Miss Porter.

*Sunday after the War.* By HENRY MILLER. New Directions. \$3.00.

An original and significant writer presents a comprehensive selection from unpublished writings. The first "fragment" is a diatribe on the mistakes America has made and is making, some of which we must admit. Social critic, vitriolic observer of mankind, eloquent and moving student of human motives and emotions.

*The Best American Short Stories, 1944.* Edited by MARTHA FOLEY. Houghton. \$2.75.

Thirty stories of wide variety, by old and new authors, chosen from the best magazines. The Foreword by the editor is significant. She takes stock of the many new writers and deplores the commercialized fiction which, in desperation, is turned out by many brilliant authors. "I make no plea for grim-

ness in writing. Laughter is as valid as tragedy. I do make a plea for the truth."

*Time Must Have a Stop.* By ALDOUS HUXLEY. Harper. \$2.75.

At seventeen, Sebastian Barnac, living in Florence and London—time, the late twenties—was considered a weakling by his radical, self-centered father because the boy was shy, immature, a dreamer, and wrote poetry. He turned to his beauty-loving, sensual uncle for understanding. Tragic and humorous. Always brilliant. Controversial. Much art, philosophy, religion. Psychic.

*Final Score.* By WARREN BECK. Knopf. \$2.50.

Bill Hutton was a football hero; college publicity with great suddenness raised him to dizzy heights of glory; nothing in his heritage, childhood, and youth had prepared him for this eminence. Naturally he loved it, but fame did little to broaden his life and interests. His football days are over. What now, little man? This is a psychological study worth careful reading. Hutton was a football hero, but his fellows make the front page in many fields.

*Stories by Erskine Caldwell.* Selected by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY. Duell, Sloan. \$2.50.

Twenty-four representative stories ranging from humor to pathos, including "Kneel to the Rising Sun." Many of his stories are of the South, but several have a Maine background. Critical Foreword by Dr. Canby.

*Freedom Road.* By HOWARD FAST. Duell, Sloan. \$2.75.

The author of *Citizen Tom Paine* writes, in *Freedom Road*, of the Reconstruction period in the South. In a prologue Fast says: "Two hundred thousand of these black men were soldiers of the republic when the struggle finished and many of them went home with guns in their hands. Gideon Jackson, who was one of these, represented his community at the South Carolina convention. For several years his village of whites and blacks lived in peace. Then came politics—the Ku Klux Klan and bloodshed."

*Valley of the Sky.* By HOBART D. SKIDMORE. Houghton. \$2.00.

So many authors have written of the devastating emotional effects of this war upon people who have suffered in it that Mr. Skidmore's study of a heavy-bomber crew is heartening. He studies them separately and as a crew, their memories, hopes, the images they carry in their minds, and finds them boys who want to get this war finished and, above all, who want to get back home to remembered joys and to things dearer and more important to them now because of shared danger and responsibility.

*Invasion Diary.* By RICHARD TREGASKIS. Random. \$2.75.

The author of *Guadalcanal Diary* gives a day-by-day record of conditions under which Rome was raided, Sicily, Salerno, and Naples stormed. The reactions of the wounded are a story in themselves.

*We Live in Alaska.* By CONSTANCE HELMERICKS. Little, Brown. \$3.00.

And so, loving adventure, eager and resourceful, this young couple went to Alaska in 1941. Fortunately, a legendary uncle was found, and for a short time they lived with him, until Bud got a defense-project job. They were never settlers—they hunted and roamed—they wanted to know Alaska. A gay and entertaining book, but important.

*We Stood Alone.* By DOROTHY ADAMS. Longmans, Green. \$3.00.

The author was the American wife of a Polish economist and diplomat, Jan Kostaneki, now dead. She tells of her early impressions of life in her adopted country and how she came to love Poland. An intimate and inspiring picture of the Polish people during these fearsome years of invasion.

*George Bancroft: Brahmin Rebel.* By RUSSEL B. NYE. Knopf. \$3.50.

The first major American historian, 1800-1891. A broad and comprehensive study of a brilliant man who accomplished an amazing number of revolutionary, forward-looking improvements in political, social, educational fields. The author's grandfather was a firm admirer of Bancroft, and as a boy Nye developed his interest in the man and his accomplishment through browsing in the senior Nye's library.

*For the Time Being.* By W. H. AUDEN. Random. \$2.00.

Louis Untermeyer calls Auden "the most surprising poet writing in English." He offers two long poems: "For the Time Being—A Christmas Oration" and "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*."

*East by Southwest.* By CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE. Coward-McCann. \$2.50.

A little book with many facets of interest. The islands of the southwestern Pacific are finding their way into recent fiction. La Farge brings to us a feeling of the immensity of the Pacific and its many islands and also a perception of the life our service boys lead there. Episodes—tragic, gay, and lonely—make up the book.

*China Looks Forward.* By SUN FO. Day. \$3.00.

Son of the founder of the Chinese Republic, the author has dared to criticize both domestic and international actions of the present regime. Not the least of these is the "dictatorial bureaucracy" of his

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*Hawthorne the Artist: Fine Art Devices in Fiction.* By LELAND SCHUBERT. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.50.

An attempt to show, by many illustrative examples, Hawthorne's artistry in "his use of structure, line, mass, movement, contrast, variety, rhythm, color, sound, and so on." Although freely admitting that form and content should not usually be separated, the author here confines himself vigorously to a study of form; and, though he assumes the reader's familiarity with the stories, he uses abundant quotations, and his analysis is not hard to follow.

*Thomas Traherne: A Critical Biography.* By GLADYS I. WADE. Princeton University Press. \$3.00.

An Australian scholar who participated in the identification of manuscripts of "rediscovered" Thomas Traherne and in the unearthing of material on his life here attempts a fairly complete commentary on his life and works.

*Teaching Composition and Literature.* By LUCIA B. MIRRIELES. Rev. ed. Harcourt. \$2.50.

One of the sanest and most complete treatments of the teaching of both of the main branches of English in junior and senior high school. The author has observed, and read almost everything that has been written about the teaching of English, and has thought; she here organizes the results for the benefit of the less serious. Her position may be said to be liberal but not radical. The book is to be recommended to prospective teachers and it has helpful ideas even for teachers at the junior college level.

*A Design for General Education.* American Council on Education. Paper. \$1.25.

This report of a committee—T. R. McConnell, of the University of Minnesota, chairman—deals directly with general education for members of the Armed Forces. Since, before the report was complete, it was discovered that many colleges thought it might prove helpful to them in their preparation for postwar education of service men and women, it has been prepared for distribution to the colleges. Only one-quarter of the book is general discussion and listing of objectives. The remainder consists of outlines in varying detail of courses that the committee recommends. Among these are "Oral and Written Communication," "Problems of American Life," "American Life and Ideals in Literature,"

"Readings in the Short Story, Drama, Biography, Poetry, and the Novel," and "Form and Function of Art in Society."

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*The American Looks at the World.* By CARLOS BAKER. Harcourt. \$1.60.

The organization of this prose anthology is by regions: Europe, Africa and the Near East, the Far East, Latin America, the U.S.A. The authors are practically all contemporary Americans. Fiction and nonfiction are about equal in amount.

*The United States Armed Forces Institute Tests of General Educational Development*, Test I: *Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression*; Test II: *Interpretation of Reading Materials in the Social Studies*; Test III: *Interpretation of Reading Materials in the Natural Sciences*; Test IV: *Interpretation of Literary Materials*. Cooperative Test Service of the American Council on Education, 15 Amsterdam Avenue, New York 23.

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*Grammar Rhetoric and Composition for Home Study.* By RICHARD D. MALLERY. New Home Library. \$0.69.

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